

THE
SIN and DANGER
OF
Profane Swearing
EXPOSED,
IN SEVERAL
SERMONS.

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THE THIRD EDITION.



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S E R M O N I.

E X O D U S XX. 7.

Thou shalt not take the Name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his Name in vain.

BEFORE I consider these Words, I would premise a few things; that are of some weight with me, though they are no more than circumstantial to the Subject, that I have chosen.

I. I shall honestly confess, that it was ever remote from my Thoughts, to preach upon any Text of this nature, had I not been some years ago importuned to do it. And I am now convinc'd, there's the greatest Occasion to bear a warni and open Testimony against a Crime, with which the Nation is overspread, and by which it is likely to be ruined. 'Tis a Sin like that of *Babylon*, that reaches up to *Heaven*; and God will remember such a bold *Iniquity*. 'Tis time for Ministers of all Denominations to unite their Zeal against a Wickedness that is a great deal worse than either Superstition or Schism; and has

The Sin and Danger of

now prevail'd among us without any distinction of Parties. *All Flesh has corrupted its Way.*

2. I grant, that Discourses of this nature are what you are not much used to. It has been commonly thought, that preaching against this Immorality was not at all *needful* in our Assemblies, and therefore could not be very *suitable*, or pleasing to 'em. For,

3. I may suppose the Crime, that's branded in this Text, is what many of us *never once* committed in all our Lives; and therefore perhaps some may think, as there is no Danger of the Practice, there's no Occasion for a Guard: But that's carrying the Matter too far; for there's no Impiety so distant from your Temper, and unknown in your Lives, which *Satan* may not lead you to, and God in his righteous Judgment may leave you in. We are none of us above that Caution: *Be not high minded, but fear;* and, *let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall**. David confessed the *Transgression of the Wicked*†, said in his Heart, there is no Fear of God before his eyes. That is, he could judge of the Atheism that is apparent in others, by the Seeds of a corrupt Nature in himself. Many of us can say, as to profane Swearing, or Cursing, (through the Blessing of God upon a religious Education) there has not been a single Instance, in which we have thus offended with our Lips. When Children are trained up in the Way they should go, whilst they are young, 'tis not likely that in old Age they will depart from it.

4. 'Tis a thing beyond all dispute, that our Fathers were *never* guilty of this Abomination, their Fnnemies themselves being Judges. The *proverbial* Character given them, in contempt, is a publick Testimony to their being thus unspotted from the World. They were charged with Preciseness and Superstition, when they used the Name of God with an holy Guard of Reverence. And I wish there was more

Inquiry

* Rom. xi. 20.

† Pfalm xxxvi. 1.

Profane Swearing.

5

Inquiry into those good old Paths, wherein so many found Rest to their Souls. For several Years I did not think, that there was a Swearer, or a Sabbath-breaker, among all the Dissenters in *England*. These Sins were not so much as named among them. And indeed they are not the Spots of God's Children, nor consistent with a Form of Godliness. But,

5. It is not with us as in Times past. How is our Gold become dim ! How is the fine Gold changed ! I used to think, that Profaneness and Non-conformity would never meet in one Person : But it is more than I can say now. We have a Generation whose Mouths are unguarded, their Lips are their own ; and Children can dare to talk, what their Fathers would have trembled to hear.

6. The most tremendous Examples of swearing, and cursing that I have heard of, were among those, that have been brought up in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord. Such as do not improve a religious Education will soon be like a neglected Garden, that shall grow ranker and fuller of Weeds than a common Desert.

Having opened the Way by these Particulars, I shall make no more Apology for a few Sermons upon this third and great Commandment : *Thou shall not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain ; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his Name in vain.* You are as much acquainted with these Words as any in the Bible. Every body knows them. Many have repeated them a thousand times, or answered them with a Response : *Lord have Mercy on us ; and incline our Hearts to keep this Law.* If they are guilty after this, they have approached the great God with a lying Tongue ; and he has no pleasure in Fools. But consider,

1. This Sentence was delivered by the most High God himself : *He spake all these Words from the midst of the Cloud and thick Darkness ; and therefore his*

Honour is concerned either in securing the *Duty*, or executing the *Vengeance*. He will not have this Precept appear in full force against the Glory of his Name, or suffer it to be said, that he will hold that Man guiltless, who is above measure guilty of taking his Name in vain. It would be a Reproach upon him, if a profane Swearer should escape his Anger. If he commands what is not *needful*, or threatens what is not *certain*, his Book can be of no reputation: But in the Day of Wrath there will be no room to say, that his Word has failed: And *every Mouth* that is now so liberal of Oaths, and Impudence, shall then be stopt; and *the whole World become guilty** before him.

2. This he delivered to his own peculiar People, the *Jews*, whom he had set apart for himself, and brought out of *Egypt* by Signs and Wonders; and therefore we can't think, that he would give them any Law, but what was holy, just, and good. Had there been the least credit, or advantage, in profaning his Name, he would not have grudged the Children of *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, the use of that Liberty. But he has required of them, not only to do justly, and love Mercy, but to *walk humbly with their God*; that there might be a plain difference between the Voice of Children and the Barking of Dogs.

3. This he introduced in such a manner as left them under the greatest Impressions. They were three days preparing for it. And when the time for giving the *Law* came, Mount *Sinai* was all in a smoke: Angels sounding their Trumpets, at the head of it; the People trembling at a distance. Nay, *so terrible was the sight, that Moses himself said, I exceedingly fear, and quake* †. You may hear it with an indifference; but not one of that vast Assembly was capable of doing so.

4. This was also always called the Moral Law; as having a perpetual Obligation upon all Men. And it

* Rom. iii. 19.

† Heb. xii. 21.

Profane Swearing.

7

it is with an ill grace, that they who daily break it, should profess themselves to be Opposers of all *Mysteries*, or the Advocates of *Morality*. It is not limited to those People, or those Ages, that were under a ceremonial Conduct. Many of their Laws were only a *Shadow of good things to come*. But the Prohibition of Swearing, Murder, Adultery, and Theft, are sacred for ever. They cannot cease to have their force of commanding and condemning as long as the World stands.

5. There is something in human Nature that bears witness to this Precept: The Work of the Law is written in our Hearts. The Articles of Christianity could never be discover'd without Revelation. *We have not received the Spirit of the World*, the Light of Reason, or natural Conscience, but *the Spirit which is of God, that we may know the things that are freely given us of God**. Your Belief and Dependance on him, who died the just for the unjust; your Adoration of three Persons in one, eternal, undivided Nature, are Articles that must be *received*, wherever they are *revealed*; for the Gospel is to be preached with this awful Stamp upon it, *He that believes shall be saved; and he that believes not shall be damned*†. But, here's a Rule that would have its weight, had there been no Bible in the Wcrld. Your *Consciences bear witness*‡ to it; your Thoughts in the mean time extreme excusing, or accusing one another.

6. The Reason of the Duty is so clear, and the Engraving so deep, that whether it *succeeds* or no, it will not be *suspected*. You do know, that they who do these things are worthy of the righteous Judgment of God, though you both do the same, and have pleasure in them that do them. I pronounce the Sentence of Condemnation on a Sinner, that is guilty of this Immorality, from the Authority of a Court within him: Though our Age is become a

rarity

* 1 Cor. ii. 12.

† Mark xvi. 15.

‡ Rom. ii. 15.

rarity in Wickedness ; we are not without Examples of People, who will plead for Swearing. And when this is done, by Men that have known better, God has given them up to a *reprobate Mind* ; and you may fear to some *vile Affections* ; as they did not like to retain him in their knowledge.

I must therefore lament, with the late excellent Bishop Fleetwood, in his Sermon on this Text ; “ How unhappy is it, that Men go on in a Practice, which they carry a perpetual Condemnation to, in their own Minds ? It is an usual Argument against any Discourses of this nature, that the Preacher has said nothing, but what we knew before. This declares the Case of those Persons very criminal, and dangerous, that what they do is in violence to themselves.”

The Words consist of two Parts.

I. A plain Prohibition, or a Command delivered in a negative Form : *Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain.*

II. An awful Reason in the same negative Language : *For the Lord will not hold him guiltless, that taketh his Name in vain.* This is the Division of the Text ; according to which, I shall lay out the Method of these Sermons.

I. I would consider the Wickedness, that is here forbid. *Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain.* There are three Things, that enter into the Description of this Impiety. Let us enquire,

First, Who this *God* is.

Secondly, What is meant by his *Name*.

Thirdly, What it is, to *take it in vain*.

First, He who has given us this Warning, has also given us his own Character under these two Titles,

1. He is the *Lord*. And,
2. He is *thy God*

I shall enlarge no more upon these Heads, than to shew you the Connection they have to the Duty expected from us.

He is 1. the *Lord*, or *Jehovah*. This is the grand Peculiar. He, whose Name alone is *Jehovah*, is the most High, over all the Earth *. When, the Title of God, is bestowed upon any other, it is with a Diminution; and delivered in a Figure that signifies less in them, than it does in him. There are *Gods many*, and *Lords many*; but he is the *true God*, and the everlasting King †. However, this other Name, he has set at the front of his Law. *Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one Lord* ‡; or *Jehovah, thy God, is one Jehovah*. That's not a Name that he will give to another. Christ Jesus would never have been called *Jehovah*, were it not, that he is *in the Form of God*, and thinks it no Robbery to be *equal with God* ||. This I shall not enlarge upon, because it is an Article of revealed Religion; and the Men, that deny it, want to be talked to upon the head of *natural*. I can't omit a Notion, that the most famous Opponent to the Deity of Christ, has given us: I know not how far *Criticism* may allow it, but *Conscience* will be ever shock'd at it. 'Tis this; that the Term *God* does not signify any individual Glory, or Perfection, in him, that has it; but only his *Dominion* over others. We may set such profane and vain bablings in the front of those Crimes, that are condemn'd in my Text. It is the chief way of taking the Name in vain. But such Distortions of a Word, that had always a determin'd Sense, are some of those sorry shifts, that Men are driven to in opposing the Faith of the Gospel. 'Tis an opinion, not so much as named, among those of the Heathen, that owned a supreme God. And shall our Bible introduce an error, that was too gross

* Psal lxxxiii. 18. † 1 Cor. viii. 8. ‡ Deut. vi. 4. || Phil. ii. 6.

gross for them? Was there no God, till there was a *Creature*? Or, was not that his Name? The Psalmist thought otherwise: Before the Mountains were created, or ever thou hadst made the World; from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God*. Remember, he who speaks in this Text, and challenges to his Name the Reverence of your Thoughts and Words, is the great *Jehovah*. The meaning of this Title he himself has given us: *I am, that I am* †. He was, when there was none besides. He never did begin; and he never can end. He is of unlimited Power, unspotted Holiness, and an unbounded Eternity. And can you think, that such a Majesty is to be trifled with? *Fear ye not me, saith the Lord? Will ye not tremble at my presence* ‡.

If you had ever seen an *Angel*, in his Glory, as *Gideon*, *Manoah*, *Daniel*, *Zachary*, and the Virgin *Mary* did, you could not have made his Name a common jest, or a meer trifle, in your Language. How indecent would it be, for any Person, to lard his Sentence with the King's Name? And with every foolish or passionate thing he says, to tattle out one of the Royal Titles? Such an Impertience would be nauseous in all *Conversation*. And yet, what are all the Names of Men, or Angels, if compared to that, which is *above every Name*? Shall he be treated in a way, that a Creature would resent? Offer it to thy *Gouvernour* ||: Will he be pleased with thee or accept thy Person, or take it with good-will at thy hand? Must that be a *Liberty* in speaking of him, that would be a *Misdemeanour* to an earthly Monarch? 'Tis pity, that a custom, that has no place in *Reason*, should have any in *Practice*; and that every Man must bear, what no Man can defend.

2. Another of his Titles is, *thy God*. This is said to the *Jews*, that he might rivet upon their Minds the Relation they stood in to him. Thus he begins:

* *Psal. xc. 2.* † *Exod. iii. 14.* ‡ *Jer. v. 22.* || *Mal. i. 8.*

I am the Lord, thy God, that brought thee out of the Land of Egypt, and out of the House of Bondage. This he did for no other People. They were the only Nation, whom he fetch'd out of the midst of another Nation. And he is called, the God of the Hebrews, or the God of Israel, upon two accounts;

1. To shew his great concern about them. *Salvation was of the Jews* *. To them pertained the Adoption, the Glory, the Service of God, the Covenants, the Promises †; their's were the Fathers, and of them, as concerning the Flesh, Christ was to come, who is over all God blessed for ever. So that their Disobedience was all Ingratitude. A swearing Jew would be guilty of pouring Contempt upon a national Friend. Do you thus requite the Lord, O foolish People, and unwise? Is not he thy Father ‡, that has made thee? But they were unmindful of the Rock that begat them ||; and lightly esteemed the God of their Salvation. Besides this, the Title signifies,

2. The Glory of his Deity. Others worshipped they knew not what. The Gentiles did service to those, that by Nature were no Gods **. They were carried away to dumb Idols ††. But the Supremacy of the God of Israel was a Debate, that the Jews had with all the World: As Moses tells Pharaoh, there is none like unto our God. And here's the force of the Argument against profane Swearing, that it was a dishonour to the eternal Deity. The Vanities of the Heathen could not hear the Criminal; and left it upon their Zealots, to punish him. But, how abominable is it, that a Jew should swear by the true God, who would be ashamed to worship a false one? This was indeed peculiar to them, that he brought them out of Egypt, and avouch'd them to be his People, and himself to be their God. But, we may, upon equal grounds, speak of his Relation to us.

I.

* Joh. iv. 22. — † Rom. ix. 3, 4. ‡ Deuteron. xxxii. 6.
|| ver. 18. ** Gal. iv. 8. †† 1 Cor. xii. 2.

1. He is *thy God*, as a Creator, a Governor, and a Judge. This he is to all Mankind. And I had not observed it, were it not, that in this Argument the holy *Jews* used to address those that had no sense of their *Peculiar*, and no share in it. As *Daniel* says to *Nebuchadnezzar*, there is a *God in Heaven* ‡, that reveals Secrets. And that Person must, with a very great expence to himself, know, that there *the most High rules in the Kingdoms of Men*. Thus he also tells *Belshazzar*, that *the God in whose hand thy Breath is* ||, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified. So far we may certainly go with any Swearer in all the world: Thou art spurning at the hand that formed thee; kicking at thy Lawgiver; daring thy Judge. The *Breath*, that he suffers to be in thy *Mouth*, is all in *his hand*; and he can as easily stop it, as he now blames it.

2. We may go farther, in our *National Mercies*. He is *our God* upon that account; and therefore, he is a vile *Briton*, an ungrateful *Englishman*, or *Scotchman*, that makes a jest of that God, who has so often saved us; as if we were delivered to commit all these Abominations. They seem to have no sense of *national Blessings*, who with open Mouth, are throwing out their Filth upon a *national Benefactor*. We reckon those Enemies to our Country, who revile the Memory of King WILLIAM. A Zeal for Religion and Liberty, will give us a disdain of any sordid Wretches, that abuse the Name of him, by whose means we had 'em. And, shall we not be fired at the Dishonour of God, by whose Spirit that Great Prince was formed, and by whose Providence he succeeded?

Let a Swearer pass for the worst of our *Malecontents*. A Traitor may be supposed to act from a *Principle*: but a Swearer has *none*. A blaspheming *Whig* is a Load upon the Earth; a Monster to be avoided and abhorred. And however God may employ them, we know

‡ Dan. ii. 28. || ch. v. 23.

know that he will condemn them. When these talk of a Zeal for the *Protestant Religion*, it is such a Blunder in Language, as every serious Man will despise and laugh at.

3. He is thy God, as the Fountain of eternal Happiness. He that is our God, is the God of Salvation *; and to God, the Lord, belong the Issues from Death. And, therefore by taking his Name in vain, the Rudeness is directed against the Author of all Grace and Glory.

Secondly, We must now enquire what that NAME of God is, which it is so criminal to take in vain. And I don't know how to give you a better Account of this, than we find in that excellent Form of sound Words, the *Assembly's Catechism*: “The Third Commandment forbids the profaning or abusing any thing whereby God makes himself known.” This is diffused into a greater number of particulars, by the larger Catechism; which, perhaps, is the best Summary both of doctrinal and practical Divinity, that the World ever saw, in any Language. “The Sin forbidden in the third Commandment, is the not using of God’s Name, as is required; and the abuse of it, in ignorant, vain, irreverent, profane, or wicked mentioning of his Titles, Attributes, Ordinances, or Works; by Blasphemy, Perjury; all sinful Curseing, Oaths, and Vows, not lawful; or fulfilling ‘em, if the things are unlawful; mur- muring and quarrelling at, or curious prying into, and misapplying his Decrees, and Providences; misinterpreting, or perverting his Word, or any part of it, by profane Jests, unprofitable Questions, vain Jangling, or maintaining false Doctrine; abusing it, or any thing contained under the Name of God, by Dreams or sinful Lusts, and Practices; maligning, scorning, reviling; or anywise opposing

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“ of

* Psalm lxviii. 20.

" of God's *Grace*, or Ways ; making a profession of
 " *Religion* in Hypocrisy, or for sinister Ends ; being
 " ashamed of it, or a shame to it ; by uncomfortable,
 " unwise, unfruitful, or offensive walking, or *back-*
 " *siding* from it."

All the particulars in this copious Exposition are founded upon so many places of Scripture. Thus richly did the Word of God dwell in the *Compilers* of that admirable Work. And in vain it is for a Set of Men to make our esteem for the *Catechism* inconsistent with our veneration for the *Bible*. Alas ! these Murmurers are far beneath those reverend Fathers, both in their acquaintance with that Book, and their Duty to it. However, I shall not take all this Latitude upon the Words of my Text ; but only observe to you, in a more general way, that as the *Name* of the Lord thy God, is any thing, by which he has made himself known ; so the Profanation, whereby it suffers, may be consider'd under these two Heads :

First, That which is directed against him, as the *Lord*.

Secondly, That which is abusive to him, as *our God*.

First, The Name of God signifies *what he is* in himself, and conveys to us those infinite Perfections, that suppose him antecedent to our Nature, and independent on it. The Words by which he has expressed those Glories of the Deity either signify his *Titles*, or his *Attributes*.

1. His *Titles*, by which he is distinguished from all other Beings, are not so *many* in our Language, as they are in the *Hebrew*. I shall collect 'em into a little room, and only put you in mind, that they stand in the Bible as the Declarations of an underived Nature ; and ought never to be taken into our Mouths, without a Reverence and godly Fear ; as *Moses* calls it,

this

this glorious and fearful Name, THE L O R D T H Y G O D *.

i. The Term *God* is peculiar to him, and signifies Independance, and Eternity. *Angels* are called *Gods*; but in every place where they have their Title, there's an abatement of the Meaning; so that we see at once, that it imports nothing of that in *them*, that it does in *Him*. For, to the *Angels* 'tis said, *Worship him, all ye Gods* †. So, Magistrates are *Gods*, but they shall die like *Men* ‡. The notion that the Term *God* signifies no more than *Dominion*, is the bold assertion of vain Deceivers, that are in a plot against the Deity of Christ; taking counsel together against the Lord, and his Anointed. If it signifies *Dominion* in *Rulers*, it can't do so in *Angels*; for there is none of them, to whom he has put in *subjection* || the World to come. The Title in its proper original Meaning, conveys to us an apprehension of an independent, eternal, infinite Being. As *God*, he is over all blessed for ever §. This then is one of those Names, that ought not to be pronounced without an awe. And those Phrases, [*God bless me, and, God have mercy,*] when they express no more than our Wonder, are very indecent: 'Tis an unbecoming Freedom with this sacred *Word*; and shews no great Sense of an infinite distance between him and us. *Holy and reverend is his Name* ††.

He, that speaks of *God* in a trivial way, throws out the greatest *Word* upon the least *Occasion*. There's no proportion between the *Matter* and the *Language*; he's gabling with a Name, which the *Angels* never utter without honour, nor the *Devils* without trembling. I could sooner be an *Atheist*, and disbelieve a *God*, than a *Swearer*, and ridicule him. If there is such a Being, he has not given us his Titles, to fill up an empty Sentence; or to animate a flat one. If this is the Name, by which he will be known, he

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never

* Deut. xxviii. 58

† Heb. i. 6.

‡ Psalm lxxxii. 6.

|| Heb. ii. 5.

§ Rom. i. 25.

†† Psal. cxi. 9.

never designed, that by it he should be *insulted*; and therefore will not hold him guiltless that takes his Name in vain.

2. Another of those Words, that he has made sacred, is that of *Lord*. Thus he caused his Glory to pass before *Moses*, with a repetition of his Title, *the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious**. These are often joined together. With these Adorations we bow at his Footstool; and they above praise him before the Throne; *holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty*†. This word *LORD* in our Translation, expresses *Jehovah* in the *Hebrew*. The Jews call it the unutterable Word: But *that* is being *devout*, which is no better than being *wise* above what's written. God has used no Word to *us*, that we may not use to *him*. And, I can't conceive, why our Translators should be so sparing of it in the *English* Bible. Had we read, that the Name of a Redeemer should be *Jehovah our Righteousness*: That in *Jehovah*, all the Seed of *Israel* should be justified, and glory; the true Meaning of that Text in the New Testament had been more popular, that every Tongue shall confess, that *Jesus* is *LORD*, to the glory of God the Father. This is another sacred *Name*, which the great God has made his own; and signifies a Glory, that we can no more comprehend in our Thoughts, than we can in our Possession. And, therefore, what he has *sanctified*, let not us make *common*. I am sorry, that our Translation of the Bible, has thrown the Word out at random in several places. *1 Cor. iv. 8. 2 Cor. xi. 1.* I would to God: whereas the Original is no more than I wish. And more frequently that other Expression, God forbid, which is only, let it not be so.

• SERMON

* Exodus xxxiv. 6.

† Rev. iv. 8.

SERMON II.

2. THE Name of God includes what we call his *Attributes*, which are so many Characters of the divine Nature, that convey to us some faint Ideas of his Perfection. These are either general or particular. The general Characters run through every particular Glory, belonging to him. He is *infinite, eternal, unchangeable*. The particular Attributes, are so many Heads of Perfection, under which we conceive of him; his *Being, Wisdom, Power, Holiness, Justice, Goodness, and Truth*. These are always to be mentioned with reverence. The common Oath among the Jews was upon the first of them, his *Being*: *As the Lord lives*. That was the supreme and most important Article, what they were surest of; and their Confidence in it, is given as a Pledge, to the Truth of any Affirmation. Thus the Angel lifted up his Hand to Heaven, and *sware by him that liveth for ever and ever* †. This is never to be taken into our lips but with great solemnity, and upon a great necessity; for confirmation, when it may put *an end to all strife* ‡. Swearing is an Appeal to God's *Omniscience*, that what we say is *true*, and a Challenge to his *Anger*, if what we say is *false*. The meaning of an Oath is to call him, who searches the Heart, as a Witness of my Integrity, or an Avenger of my Falshood. He can tell what is *right*, and I invoke his Resentment, if what I say is *wrong*.

You will easily see, that such Language is not to be used, but where the *occasion* is sacred, as well as the *action*. 'Tis monstrous in conversation, to bring in the greatest Words that we can speak, about the least

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things.

† Dan. xii. 7.

‡ Heb. vi. 16.

things that we can do. To solemnize every Trifle, and lay the highest Language upon the lowest Thoughts, is equally tremendous, and ridiculous.

II. As these are the Names of the Lord, that signify what he is in *himself*, so there are others that express his Relation to *us*: He is *thy God*. In the Text they do not only tell us, that he is our Creator, and Preserver; for that he was to all the World as well as the *Jews*; but they are a token of his particular concern about that People. And we may transplant them under the New Testament to the great Redemption, that he has wrought out for the whole *Israel of God*. When *Thomas* said to our Saviour, *my Lord, and my God*; he declar'd such a Faith in *Jesus*, as that by which we have *Life through his Name*. Now any words, that relate to this Salvation ought never to be abused, by taking them into common Language. They who bring in damnable Heresies, are describ'd by a trifling Temper of Mind. *Their profane and vain bablings* * increase unto more Ungodliness. And, how vile must it be, to use in derision, any of those Words, that give us the greatest evidence of his Love? Swearing by that *Blood, and Wounds*, upon Earth, from which we have all our hopes of getting to Heaven, is a most profligate way of trampling under foot the Son of God, and *counting the Blood of the Covenant an unholy thing* †. His *Institutions* ought never to be mentioned in common Language. Swearing by the *Sacrament*, is a direct violation of this Law, and makes us guilty of the *Body and Blood of the Lord* ‡. Swear not by *Heaven*, for it is *God's Throne*; nor by the *Earth*, for it his *Footstool*; nor by *Jerusalem*, for it is the City of the great King ||.

Thus have I shown, without crowding in many Particulars, what we are to understand, by the *Name of the Lord our God*. The Words, that he has made sacred,

* 2 Tim. ii. 16. † Heb xi. 29. ‡ 1 Cor. xi. 27. || Matt. xxiii. 22.

sacred, we should *keep* so ; and use them agreeable to their Consecration, with an *Holiness to the Lord*. I have but one thing more under this Head ; and that is,

III. To enquire, what it is to *take* the Name of God *in vain*. By the Exposition, that the larger Catechism has given us, you will see that the guilt of it is to be considered in a very extensive way. It forbids all Superstition, or want of Reverence about God's Ordinances ; all Lotteries, Curiosities, vain Jangling, and Jesting ; and many things besides, which are condemned in this Law : for the *Commandment is exceeding broad*. But I shall keep within the bounds, that I have set myself, and need only describe the Impiety under these two particulars ;

1. The *Profaneness* of an Oath. And,

2. The *Falshood* of it.

And even the latter of them I shall dismiss intirely, as more suitable to another Text ; so that the Doctrine or Proposition I am to pursue is this :

The *profane Use of these divine Words*, is highly criminal.

It is taking that Name in *vain*, which God has determined *shall be sacred*, either in a way of Authority, or of Vengeance. I am here both to *open*, and to *vindicate* the heat of this great Anger, against those, who are so abominable in their words. But at present I shall consider the *occasions* of this vile practice, by what *means* it has abounded, to the scandal of our Nation, the reproach of our Religion, and the danger of all true Liberty : for this is the Root of bitterness that lies at the bottom of all our Confusions.

1. It is very often the effect of *Impertinence* ; that Men know not what to say, and swear for want of other words. This is the softest, as well as the lowest account, we can give of it. We can say nothing more favourable of a Swearer, than that he

is a Coxcomb, an empty rattling Fool, who would be at a loss for Expressions, if he had not a set of these *in bank*. If you say, this is an affront to many who are guilty ; my Answer is, that I must either give them this Character, or a *worse*. There is nothing but silliness, and folly, can be their excuse. If it obtains among those, who are far from wanting sense ; yet, in this practice, they talk by the most unhappy Forms, that were ever chosen.

I wish, that Persons of figure, would be faithful to this Argument, and press it upon their Companions ; and that if they are not *convinced*, they may be *asham'd*. Here is a part of every Sentence, that must signify nothing at all, without the least connection to any other word. Men who would be thought Masters of Eloquence, and Propriety in Language, can thunder out a company of noisy Phrases, that have all sound, and no sense. It is not with any great justice, that such indecent, *vain Talkers*, should pass for the polite part of the World. Of all the Superfluities in Speech, that make us ridiculous, they chiefly do it, that shew an emptiness of Argument, and a fulness of Atheism.

2. Many have slid into this folly unawares, by a frequent conversation with those, that are guilty. *Be not deceived : Evil Communications corrupt good Manners**. There is no abomination, that is more contagious. If you cannot cure your Acquaintance of swearing, you are in danger of being infected by them. We are charged, not to make any friendship with an angry Man ; and, with a furious Man not to go ; lest we *learn of his ways*, and get a snare to our Souls. The Rule, and the Reason, is the same, as to a profane conversation. By degrees, our dread at the hearing of an Oath is abated ; after that, we can be more familiar with it ; this proceeds to an Indifference, and at last to an Imitation.

Let :

Let me take this occasion to warn you against a very *frivolous Impiety*, that has no beauty in it ; and that is in telling a story, People will repeat the Oaths, with which they heard it. If this is a part of the jest, drop the whole. It can be no entertainment to any, but a profane Person. A Speech that will not pass without this impious larding ought never to be taken within our lips : No Company is worth keeping, with so much hazard of Defilement to your Conversation, and of Peace to your Souls. A Man *may go* for his humour into a Pesthouse, and not be infected ; but he is a Fool that tries, whether he *can*, or no. It is the safest way to *abstain from all appearance of Evil* *.

3. In many People, this is a *design'd Impiety*. They make themselves agreeable by such Language. And, that's the case of those, who are got above their Education ; and would be distinguished from the Simplicity of their Fathers. They are afraid the World will suspect the Sincerity of their Change ; and therefore run very fast into all the ways of a popular Conviction ; that they are no longer *Fanatics*. I take it for granted, that *Peter* heard a great deal of Cursing and Swearing in the High-Priest's Hall ; which made him talk *as they did*, by way of self-defence.

Indeed, 'tis pity, any should think it an Accomplishment. And I believe, *this their way is their folly* ; and they do but grow contemptible, by the *newness* of their Impiety. Such as these have sold themselves to do evil. They have made shipwreck of Faith, and a good Conscience. Their Crime is a presage of their Ruin. They have given up *God* ; and he has given up *them* : as if there was a parting by mutual consent. I must leave these *mercenary Swearers* to the hardness of their Hearts ; for, perhaps, they'll receive no Conviction, till they get it in the Flames of another World.

4. Many

* 1 Thess. v. 22.

4. Many are betray'd into this practice of Swearing, by Gluttony and *Drunkenness*. This is sinning in the most expeditious way, with a Cruelty both to Soul and Body. That, which is pleaded as the excuse for an Oath, is an aggravation. A swearing Drunkard, one that goes on reeling and cursing, is such a mixture of the Beast and the Devil, that the Crimes of Earth and Hell are met together in him. An excess of Riot is making quick work with his Body. And, as if he was afraid his Soul would not have guilt enough, to come in for a share of Misery, he resolves that the two Abominations shall move with an equal pace.

"Twas a comfort to *David*, that his Tears were in God's Bottle : his Prayers in his Book *. But such as these, shall have all their Debaucheries filled over again in a cup of trembling. Every Oath and Curse, is noted down. And, what a number of them may you expect to find ? How many thousand Sentences are put upon your score ? If every *idle* Word is to be accounted for ; much more these *laborious* Words. Wishing for Damnation, is *working out* your Damnation. And you shall have it at large. Don't suppose, that this rattling talk dies in the air, into which you breathe it. There's not a profane Oath, that was ever sworn in the world, that does not *come into remembrance before God*. And though Men think their Tongues are their own ; yet it may take off the arrogance of that saying, to remember, what Christ has told them ; that *by thy Words*, thou art to be condemned. The Advice in this case, is plain. Keep out of the way of all these Temptations. Drunkenness, is a Sin *beneath* human Nature : Swearing, is a Sin *above* it. It is rather the wickedness of accursed *Spirits*, than adapted to the Life, we live in the *Flesh*.

5. This is often the hellish vent, that People give to their *Paffion*. They are angry, and value neither

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* Psal. lvi 8.

what they say, nor what they do ; so that here, those Words are literally true ; that *the Tongue* does not only set on fire the whole course of nature, but is *set on fire of Hell* *. This boisterous Temper is as opposite to the Design and Spirit of Christianity as any other. *We don't usually indeed speak so ill of a passionate Man, as a drunken one* ; but the *Scripture* does. He that is soon angry, deals with folly. And if any Man among you seem to be religious, and *bridles not his Tongue, that Man's Religion is vain* †. I allow that some *Tempers* are more inclined to Passion, as some *Constitutions* are to fleshly Lusts. But that's no excuse for either. 'Tis pity, that several Professors act as if they thought the Wickedness was gone out of the *Conscience*, as soon as it is out of the *Practice*. They will say, the *Fury* is quickly over ; but it is more than they know, that the *Guilt* is so. However, I only consider this Crime as it occasions *another*, and that is profane talking. And, what a dreadful Composition is here ? Here's a Person tearing his fellow Creature, who *has offended him* ; and carrying up his anger against the Lord, who *has not*. He fears not *God* ; and he regards not *Man*. When you begin with your Passion, you know not where it will end. Perhaps, here is one, who has provoked you ; and is there no way of being just against *him*, without an *Act of Injustice* against the *God*, by whom you live ? Shall your Anger reach to Heaven ? Will you take your Revenge on him, who has been always gracious, and long-suffering. Set a Watch before your Mouth ; and guard the Door of your Lips.

6. I am afraid, we may sometimes consider this Crime of Swearing, as the mark of a *judicial Impenitency*, that God has given 'em up to an hardness of Heart, by which they are *past feeling*. When Persons break through the Education that has held them in,

* Jam. iii. 6.

† Jam. i. 26.

in, they run faster than others : In Blasphemies they are more abundant. They swear and curse at an uncommon rate. This case is figured out in an awful Parable : When the unclean Spirit goes out of a Man, he is empty, swept, and garnished ; but he takes to himself *seven other Spirits more wicked than he*. That is, there is some Reformation for a while ; but the Relapse of an awaken'd Sinner, or the Apostacy of an hopeful Youth, looks like *seven Spirits*, instead of one. The latter End of that Man is worse than his Beginning. This may be considered as the Hand of God against 'em two Ways :

1. In Justice to them.
2. In Mercy to others.

1. 'Tis a righteous thing against them that have despised the Riches of his long-suffering. His Spirit will no more strive with them. They have chosen an hardness of heart ; and they shall have it. They have laughed at all the Impressions of divine Grace ; and therefore, they shall have none of 'em. They have so long grieved the Spirit of God, that now he leaves 'em to be sealed up ; not to a day of Redemption, but to a day of Wrath, and the revelation of a righteous Judgment.

2. This is for the protection of good People. When Men receive not the Love of the Truth, they fall a wrangling about the *Gospel* ; and quickly throw off all regard for the *Law*. Whilst they are disputing against revealed Religion, God leaves 'em to be scandalous about what is *natural*. Swearers set up for Criticks. Drunkards are the Advocates of Liberty. Men of no Communion cry out against Impositions. They are more tender about *Creeds*, and Catechisms, than they are about Temperance and Chastity. They will curse for *Charity* ; and foam for *Moderation* ; throwing out every argument with a Flame ; and sealing it with an Oath. This is Free-thinking with a vengeance. They do not so much as come in sheeps clothing. They are inwardly,

inwardly, nay, they are *outwardly*, ravening Wolves. Surely the Schemes, that we have from these Champions, are not likely to make any great Impression upon those, who accustom themselves to *Words of Truth and Soborness*. We are not to be bullied out of our Religion, by a Company of Swearers. God lets them be known, that they may be hated.

II. We are now to consider, the tremendous, and awful *Reason*, that is given for this Prohibition; *the Lord will not hold him guiltless, who takes his Name in vain*. This he declares in the Thunder of his Power. And, O that we, who know the Terrors of the Lord, may persuade Men; and may be manifest to every one's Conscience in the sight of God!

First, I would give you some *Tokens* of the Divine Anger against Profane Swearers.

Secondly, *Vindicate* this righteous Judgment against all the Contradictions of Sinners; for you may observe the extent, and force, of the Threatning. Though it is delivered in *negative Terms*, yet it does not signify, either,

1. Any diminution of the Crime; as if it was a mere indifference; and that a Man may be guilty of it without much Impurity, or Danger. Nor, are we to understand by it,

2. An Indolence in God, as if it was beneath him to punish all the Excursions of a rattling Tongue. He often lays out his Anger with a *reserve* of Language, that carries in it more than is expressed. Thus, when he says, my Soul shall have no pleasure in them; the meaning is not, that he throws himself into a *Neutrality* about them; as if he would neither do 'em good, nor harm. And so you are to take it here: The Lord's *not holding him guiltless* is an assurance, that he will find him guilty. His Sin goes beforehand unto Judgment. *The Heavens shall reveal his Iniquity; and the Earth shall rise up against him**. However, the man-

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* Job xx. 27.

ner of delivering this Argument signifies, as we are told in the shorter Catechism ; that “ though the breakers of this Commandment may escape Punishment from Men ; yet the Lord our God will not suffer them to escape his righteous Judgment.” Here it may be inquired and objected ;

How does it appear, that the Lord will not hold them guiltless, that take his Name in vain ? They live with the same Prosperity and Comfort, that others do. It goes well with those that dwell in their Tabernacles. As, is the Righteous ; so, is the Sinner ; and *he that* *swears, as he that fears an Oath* *. We can’t pretend to give the full Number of those Evils, that he has laid up for these Sinners : *The Thunder of his Power, who can understand?* That which lies most open to your Notice, and therefore is most proper for your Conviction, I would bring under the following Heads.

1. That a profane Swearer is one, who is totally lost, as to *all sense of God* ; and is incapable of any Advantage in the Work of Religion : For,

2. When he has got this length, he is given up to destroy the Form of Godliness ; and will either fall from his Profession, or be *scandalous* to it.

3. He is abominable in the Eyes of those who have any Notion of Eternity upon their Minds.

4. He is exposed to the Contempt of all Mankind, as one no longer to be trusted : For a *profane Oath* is the high Road to a *false one*.

5. He is unguarded against all *Temptations* ; every Wickedness may follow, when this has made the Way.

6. It brings with it a *feared Conscience* ; an Heart that cannot repent.

7. This hurries him into *Despair* ; for tho’ that may seem the most *opposite* to an Impenitency, it is not very *distant* from it.

8. The great Reserve of Anger is laid up in another World for those, that are not pluck’d as Brands out

* Eccl. ix. 2.

out of the Fire. You will easily see, that most of these Particulars are fram'd with a View to those Swearers, who have had a religious Education. And it is a most affecting Case, which the Heavens may hear, and the Earth be astonished at, that *the Lord has nourished, and brought up Children; and they have rebelled against him* *. The Families, where Prayer was wont to be made, are now the Seat of Mockers. Indeed, we have little hope of doing good to such as these; but, *that we must leave to him who made 'em, and can make his Sword approach unto 'em.*

i. The Case of Swearers is the more dangerous, as it is a terrible Argument, that they are *lost* to all Acquaintance with God. To the Wicked, the Lord says, what hast thou to do to declare my Statutes, or take my Covenant into thy Lips? Thou givest thy Mouth to Evil †. I am afraid, many will make a Jest of this; for as they design to get no spiritual good, it is no damage to miss of it. They can trifle away the Sabbath; and keep out of the Sound of the Gospel. So that this is an Argument to which the Conscience of many a Swearer is impenetrable. But, as this is a Danger, it is my Duty to open it, whether you will hear, or whether you will forbear: *To write it in Tables* ‡, and note it in a Book, that it may be for the time to come, for ever and ever; that they are rebellious People, *lying Children*, that will not hear the Law of the Lord.

Consider, what a dreadful State they must be sunk into, to all whom the Means of Grace are deadned. *If our Gospel is hid, 'tis hid to them that are lost* ||. There's not a more terrible Judgment in all the Bible, than what the Holy Ghost spake by the mouth of *Isaias* the Prophet; Go, and make the Heart of this People fat **; and close their Eyes, that they may not be converted and healed. This *may be* the Doom

* Isa. i. 2.

† Psal. i. 16.

‡ Isa. xxx. 8.

|| 2 Cor. iv. 3.

** Isa. vi. 10.

of many Professors ; but it is *certainly true* of a notorious Swearer. Nothing can do him any good, during this practice. If ever a Sermon is bless'd to his Soul, there will be an immediate *Reformation* in his Tongue. He may be zealous for the *Church*, or make a noise about *Liberty* ; but it is undeniable, that he who has no Fear of an *Oath*, has no Fear of *God*. It signifies nothing, what *Party* he belongs to : his Speech bewrays him. He is of his Father the Devil. Every thing he does in Religion hardens him ; and especially his receiving the *Lord's Supper*. The Guilt of obliging Swearers, *to eat and drink Damnation to themselves* *, is that for which God will make inquisition ; and pour Contempt upon those, who have pleaded for the Establishment of that *Iniquity by a Law*. Such Thrones have no Fellowship with him. A profane Swearer, is not only *unfit* for the Sacrament, but becomes *viler* by it ; and ripens faster for Hell. If we may judge of what enters *into* the Mouth, by what comes *out* of it, we may say of them, as it is said of *Judas*, that *Satan* has taken a new possession of 'em. And they may be supposed to eat, and drink Damnation, who bring it *out* in every Sentence.

2. A Swearer will either give up the profession he used to make, or continue it with a Plague to the Church, that he belongs to. The *former* of these is the most likely, and the most desirable. It is the Design of Excommunication, that Men may *learn not to blaspheme*. But the *latter* is what we have Examples of. From the Prophets of *Israel* Profaneness went out into all the Land. A Society shall always suffer by any publick Wickedness, which they connive at. The plain Rule of the Gospel is, to purge out the old Leaven. No Church can harbour a Swearer without a *Scandal* to itself. And though they may be puffed up in the Possession of such Members ; yet that which gives 'em so little *Care*, will give them a great

* Psal. xciv. 20.

great deal of *Danger*: for their Word will eat as a Canker, or a Gangrene. At first, the Disturbers of our Peace begin with Craftiness, and lying Words; but the Disguise goes off in time: and then, they are covetous, proud, Boasters, Blasphemers, Inventors of evil Things, unthankful, unholy, incontinent, fierce, despisers of them that are good; Traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of Pleasure more than lovers of God *. They that overthrow the *Faith* of some, will incumber the *Peace* of all. They, who deny the only Lord God, and our Lord *Jesus Christ*, are called *ungodly Men*, *raging Waves of the Sea*, foaming out their own *Shame* †. After this, they are *wandering Stars*, and separate themselves, having not the Spirit. They are Murmurers and Complainers. *Hymeneus* and *Alexander* made shipwreck, not only of Faith, but a *good Conscience*.

3. A Swearer becomes abominable to the *serious* part of the World. It is impossible, that a good Man should hear an Oath without an inward Contempt of him that utters it. And though we often want Courage to say this, yet, in the Eye of every true Christian, *a vile Person is contemn'd* ‡. 'Tis a stain upon the greatest Parts, and the most agreeable Temper. How flat does the Character come off, "that such an one is a most ingenious Man, obliging, friendly, and of good behaviour; but in every Sentence he takes a liberty of insulting the God that made him?" I fear, our Abhorrence of these Ways is too much a Secret. We ought to be more open, and daring, in the Cause of God. And, perhaps, it might be some *restraint* upon a licentious Tongue, if People knew, that thereby they forfeit the Esteem, and Confidence of those that love 'em. Especially, let us convince such as are in publick Places, that Popularity and Profaneness are inconsistent. We should not herd with those, whom God

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abhors.

* 2 Tim. iii. 4, 5. † Jude 13, 16. ‡ Psal. xv. 4.

abhors. And, can there be a greater Evidence of his abhorring them, than the perpetual Abhorrence which they shew of him ?

4. A Swearer will be the Contempt of all *Mankind*. I cannot but think, that a profane Oath is always received with a Diffidence. For my own part, I never hear a Swearer, but I suspect he is a *Liar*; because Truth does not want a frivolous solemnity. And the Person who is not afraid to dishonour a *God*, will never make any scruple of deceiving a *Man*. A profane Oath will supple the Conscience, and make it capable of an *unjust* one. When the Name of God is no more, than the Flourish of a silly Sentence, People will bring it in to cover their *Falshood*, as they do now to set off their *Impertinence*. 'Tis certainly desirable to have so much Esteem in the World, as to be capable of receiving, and doing Service to our Generation. But, if there is any Person, who draws upon himself an universal Hatred, and Suspicion, it must be a common Swearer. He puts it out of every one's power, either to heed him, or trust him.

You see by the Nature of the Crime, that it draws the Contempt of Mankind upon those, that are guilty : And, besides this ! the righteous Judgment of God helps it on. A Man, that hears you make a Jest of all that's sacred, has no handle to believe you ; nothing to show why he should trust you. An Oath is for *Confirmation* †, and should be the End of all Strife : But, it cannot be so, if you have no Reverence for the Name of him, by whom you swear ; as you must not be supposed to have, when you toss it out with Passion and Vanity. Can I have any hold of that Person's Promises, when nothing has any hold of his Conscience ? Will he be faithful to me, who is so frothy to God ? No ; the cement is gone ; the thing that should give us a mutual Assurance

† Heb. vi. 16.

Assurance in one another. Had *Zedekiah*, the King of *Judah*, been a profane Swearer, those Words would have passed for little with the Prophet; *As the Lord liveth, who made us this Soul**, I will not put thee to death. But,

This may also be considered, as the righteous Judgment of God. He honours those that honour him; but they that despise him, shall be *lightly esteemed of him* †. If his Name is contemptible to you, yours shall be so to the World. It may be said of many a one, that he had formerly a Stock of Reputation, 'till he *swore* it away. But, as he would not suffer you to hear him *without* an Oath, now you cannot believe him *with* it. We of this Nation ought to consider such a case with horror, who are descended from People, that about a hundred years ago *ruled with God, and were faithful with his Saints* ‡. When they used the sacred Name, as it was always with *solemnity*, it was always with *significancy*. What they said upon these Occasions was of weight with themselves; and, that made it to be so with all that heard 'em. They delivered it with *Reverence*, and it was received with *Confidence*. When an *English Commander* has thought it necessary, either in Words or Writing, to seal his Resolutions with an Oath, he has made all the Power of *Spain* and *France* to tremble. They were taught to know, that such an one *never* took the Name of God in vain. But a profane Person has all the Air of a Prostitute. Even they, that see no harm in the *Crime*, will have a suspicion of the *Man*.

* Jer. xxxviii. 16. † 1 Sam ii. 30. ‡ Hos. xi. 12.

S E R M O N III.

5. A Swearer is unguarded against all Temptations to any other Wickedness ; he is like a City, that is broken down, and without Walls. You seldom see this Vice alone. It *promotes* the very Crimes, from whence it *proceeds* ; and is both giving, and taking the same moment. If it is the Language of your *Pride*, and *Vanity*, it puts a new Strength into these Impurities : For the Man, who gives such a vent to his Haughtiness, will grow intolerable. *He sets his Mouth against the Heavens ; and his Tongue walks over the Earth* *. Swearing increases the *Passion*, by which it is produced. Every Sentence blows up the Flame ; and shows, that *the Tongue is set on fire of Hell* †. People that suffer themselves to take this Liberty, will find that it grows upon 'em. They will be exposed to the worst Company. A Swearer is fit for none, but those that are fit for Hell. He must either be a Burden to others, or they to him. As Religion begins with the Fear of God, (Faith itself is moved with Fear ‡,) so a Man that has no Fear of God before his Eyes, will commit Iniquity with greediness. And, if they do not scruple an Act of Profaneness, they will scruple no Abomination, which they may go through without shame, or danger. 'Tis the Language of Thieves, and Robbers ; of Highwaymen, and Murderers ; and the whole train of Hell, that are yet upon earth.

6. Swearing is both the evidence, and the *means* of a feared Conscience, and an Heart that cannot repent ; especially in those, whose Education had given them a better turn. When Praying was the work of a

Parent,

* Psal. lxxiii. 9. † Jam. iii. 6. ‡ Heb. xi. 7.

Parent, and Cursing is that of the Child, there's a great change in that Family. They are free among the Dead ; and such as God remembreth no more. If a Man is a Drunkard, or a Fornicator, there may be something left within him, to fasten a Reproof on. But, if with these he becomes a Swearer, his Heart will be like the nether Millstone. How can you think, that he will have any regard to your Reproof, who has none to the Name of the Great God ? You can tell him nothing that he does not know, and despise. He holds all your Arguments at defiance.

7. This Iniquity above all others will throw People into despair. A Sin may be punished by that against which it seems to be most defended. Covetousness leads to Beggary. There is a withholding more than is meet, and it tendeth to Poverty. He, that makes haste to be rich, shall not be innocent ; and considers not, that *Poverty shall come upon him**. Gluttony brings People to loath dainty Food. Pride, and an haughty Spirit go before a Fall. And though Swearing argues an intrepidity ; yet it oftentimes ends in a *Despair*. There's no Man upon Earth so likely to begin his Hell before he dies, as he that often *wishes for Damnation* before it comes. Perhaps, you have gone on for several Years, with a free course of Blasphemy ; either, you *shall* have a sence of this Impiety, or you *shall not*. If you *have not*, you go blindfold into a World, that's all profane. If you *have*, what must you think of yourselves, when you feel the Terrors of the Lord ; and find that he is a jealous God, whom you have treated with a daily Scorn ? Will you not conclude, that he is *bound* to punish *you*, who have so often *dared* him to do it ?

8. The great Reserve of his Anger is for another World. Conscience *may* be awaken'd in this Life ; but it *will* be so in the next. And as Hell is the Place of Torment, it's the place of Feeling. The Art of hearing

* Prov. xxviii. 22.

hearing without applying ; and turning off an Argument with a Sneer, will be all lost, on the other side Death. There may be but a little time between swearing and dying. In this Language many have breathed out their Souls. The last Thing they say is, to *wish* for Damnation ; the first thing they meet with is, to *receive* it. This ought to be the concern of our *Armies*, who are in *jeopardy every hour*. A few Moments may carry off a thousand, without any leisure to change their way of talking. It's not to be supposed, that they'll be capable of saying, *God save me*, whose Mouths have been used to a very different Expression. The Bullet comes in as the Curse is going out. And as they have freely *damn'd themselves*, the Great God takes them at their word. *He, that being often reproved, hardens his Neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy* *.

Before I go any farther, let me review what you have heard, with two Words of Application.

1. See the forbearance and *long-suffering of God*, who endures with much patience the Vessels of Wrath, that are fitted for Destruction. *Because of Swearing the Land mourns* † : The Earth is putrified, the Air is corrupted. 'Tis a scandal to our Nation. Here's a *Curse gone over the Earth*, and *every one that swears shall be cut off according to it* †. 'Tis the Infamy of this Age, that such Wretches go along the Streets, who were restrained in the *last*. 'Tis a sign that they, *that work Wickedness, are set up*, when they *that tempt God* (even to damn 'em) *are delivered* ||. Why does not Providence rush into the Quarrel ; and give 'em what they call for ? We can only say, he is God, and not Man ; and therefore does not return to execute the fierceness of his Anger.

2. How exceeding abundant must that *Grace* be, that among the vilest of People, can make *Vessels to Honour* !

* Prov. xxix. 1. † Jer. xxiii. 10. ‡ Zech. v. 3.

|| Mal. iii. 15.

Honour ! Such were some of you † ; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. He waited many Years to be gracious : you were then prisoners of Hope, and now you are plucked, as brands out of the Fire. Satan took it for granted, that you were all his own. But your Experience is a living Argument, that there's a stronger than he, who has taken from him all his Armour wherein he trusted ; and divided his Spoils.

Secondly, Upon this awful Subject, I would ascribe Righteousness to my Maker ; and say, that the Judgment of God is according to Truth, against them that do such things. Just and right is he, who has told us, that he will not hold him guiltless, that takes his Name in vain. Upon this head, I shall lay before you the Vileness of the Crime itself ; and the horrid Impurity of the Man, who commits it.

1. A Swearer strikes at the first Principles of all Religion, both natural and revealed, which is, that there is a God ; and that he ought to be had in reverence.

2. He dishonours this God without any Provocation.

3. He does it in defiance of those Threatnings, that are recorded in the Book of Life.

4. He pours out the inward Contempt of his Soul upon all that is sacred.

5. He destroys the ground of all mutual Confidence that Men have with one another.

6. He sins without the Temptations of Profit or Pleasure : And as he has *sold himself* to do evil, he is the *cheapest Bargain* that Satan has in all the world.

7. This is the Iniquity of the Devils : And where can be the honour of sinning after their fashion ?

8. 'Tis a Violence offered to a Man's own Conscience.

9. 'Tis

† 1 Cor. vi. 11.

9. 'Tis with a Scorn of the *best human Laws*, that we have upon Earth. And,

10. When such as these dispute against Revelation, it fills up the *Measure of their Iniquity*; and they become nauseous both to God and Man.

Behold a Swearer in this light. Take your opinion of him, not by the Custom of a degenerate Age, but from the true Nature of Things. Though *he blesses himself in his own Heart, and says, I shall have peace**; yet when God stretches out his Hand against him, and strikes him down with a sudden Judgment, all Mankind are filled with an Awe, and think (if they do not say it,) that *the Lord is righteous*; he has given the Cup of Trembling to those that are *worthy*.

1. Here's a Wickedness, that demolishes the main Principle of all Religion; that *God is to be had in reverence*. This is undisputed, even among the *Heathen*; for, what may be known of God is *manifest in them* †; and it's at their peril, if they do not act according to it, and *glorify him as God*. *Revelation* also begins here. *He that comes unto God must believe that he is* ‡. Nay, there's a full Argument of this in *Hell*. There *they believe, and tremble* ||. Now, by a Swearer these foundations are destroyed. The Principles that are owned in the very Chambers of Darkness pass for nothing with him. In *Works* he denies God; nay, he does it in *Words*. He is not content with the Folly of saying in his *Heart*, there's no God: but it's the Sin of his *Mouth*; the Iniquity of his *Lips*: he speaks it aloud. We have a dread of an *Atheist*, a Man who goes about with cool and sober Reasoning against the usual Sentiments of the World. He is regarded with horror. We look upon him as a *Monster in our Nature, and an Enemy to it*. And, can you think any better of a Swearer? The Difference between them is this: The one denies, what he does not believe; and the other profanes what he professes.

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* Deut. xxix. 19. † Rom. i. 19. ‡ Heb. xi. 6. || Jam. ii. 19.

He has left off to be wise; to do good: He abhors not Evil. If you try Men's *Opinions* by their *Practice*, which is the fairest way, you cannot think that he, who blasphemes a God, does apprehend one. Does he believe a Vengeance, who dares it upon his own Head, with familiar Imprecations? Who makes it his *Common Prayer*? and begs for it, as if it was for his *daily Bread*? Can he suppose that God is infinite, and transcendent above all, whom he uses with a Rudeness, that he durst not offer to his Equal? The fear of punishment, and the rules of decency, will oblige us to speak of those, who are but little above us, with respect, and caution. And, is it not a righteous thing with God, to let those that despise him, feel, in earnest, what they talk of in jest?

Do but compare a Swearer with those, that have any Doubts about the lower Principles of Religion; such an one delivers his objections with modesty, and ought to be heard with meekness. But, he that profanes the Name of God, strikes at every thing that's sacred: And, he does it with an arrogance, that shows him to be triumphant over all shame. And, can such an one, if he is despis'd, or punished, pretend, that he suffers for Religion? If there is a God, he is loudly call'd upon to vindicate his Glory: And we need not doubt, but he will do it. They, that despise his long-suffering, do not escape his wrath! They only *treasure* it up to the Day of Wrath *: For, when he comes in Clouds, every Eye shall see him; even they that have *pierced* him through with their bitter words; and all Kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.

2. A Swearer goes on to dishonour the God, that has given him *no provocation*. He is angry without cause. This is usually the Language of an uncontrol'd Passion. But, why must it be directed against him, that has done us good, and not evil all our days?

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Suppose

* Rev. i. 7.

Suppose you are injured, abus'd, and affronted; and think yourself defended in all the returns of anger, and contempt; yet why must a *gracious God*, who has had no share in the *Provocation*, have so much in the *Resentment*? There's the utmost ingratitude in a Swearer, to the God, in whose hand his breath is. Profane People do by the *Glory* of his Name, as *Belhazzar* did by the *Vessels* of his House: they are first abus'd to *Idolatry*, and then to *Luxury*. And, no wonder that he who *strikes through Kings*, in the day of his wrath †, took his aim at that impudent *Affyrian*, who lost his Crown and his Life together.

Let a Swearer consider the *baseness* of his Soul, who derides the hand, that has fed him all his life long unto this day; and uses prosperity and fulness to the dishonour of him that gave it. If a Man should be so fantastical as to curse his Enemies by the Earth, or Air, in which he breathes; would not the World think him unworthy of a Place in either of 'em? And, yet the Case before us is equally vile, and equally ridiculous. The God, whom you profane, is he, *in whom you live, and move, and have your being* †. He gives you Life, and Breath, and all things. Your Riches, Health, and Honour, come from him. And, 'tis pity, that he who is your Friend, should be your Jeſt.

3. A Swearer sins in defiance of all the Threatnings that are recorded in the Book of God. He has heard the *Words of the Curse*; and, yet blesses himself in his own heart. And, shall not the Lord be aveng'd on such a Nation as this? Do but observe what's contain'd in a divine Threatning.

First, It's the voice of a *Lawgiver*, and comes with a Sound of his Authority. He, that has a Right to command, has also a Power to punish. *He is able to save, and to destroy* ||.

Secondly,

† Psal. cx. 5.

‡ Act. xvii. 28.

|| Jam iv. 12.

Secondly, 'Tis an Argument of his *Holiness*. Sin is the abominable thing, that his Soul hates.

Thirdly, 'Tis the Evidence of his *Love*, and *Pity*. We are warned concerning things not seen, as yet, to fly from the *Wrath* to come. And,

Fourthly, 'Tis a Pledge laid in for the honour of his *Truth*; and therefore the Execution will turn out to his *Glory*. Now, a Swearer who despises the Terror of the Lord, throws his contempt upon all these Perfections. He values not God's Right of *Empire*, or Capacity of *Vengeance*. He laughs at his *Law*. He will venture his *Wrath*. And, therefore the question whether such an one shall be punished is very little different from another, whether God's Throne be a Reality, or his Government a Fiction. 'Tis abominable in a Preacher, if he says to those that despise the Lord, they shall have peace: Because God is of purer Eyes than to behold *Iniquity* + But a Swearer runs the hazard of all. He'll try whether the Holiness of a Command, or the Blaster of Atheism, shall get the better. And, if such as these should escape a righteous *Vengeance*; the Forbearance and Long-suffering of God, the Voice of his Indignation, and Anger, his Truth, his Purity, and his Power, will pass for nothing. If he that *hardens himself* against the Almighty should prosper, no divine Attribute will ever again be exalted in the high Praises of the Saints. But to cut off all these vain and lazy Thoughts, we are told that *God will be true, and every Man a Liar* ‡; as if the Contest was between his Words and theirs.

Let a Swearer bring what he thinks into judgment against what God says. He is ready enough to tell you, that there's no harm in a frivolous Use of the Divine Name. The most that can be made of it is, that it is an hasty Word; and it argues a precise Opinion, that Men should be damn'd for that which

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does

+ Hab. i. 13.

‡ Rom. iii. 4.

does no hurt. From these moderate notions of such Language they may in time get the length of placing it among the *Rights of human Nature*; and say, it is a Breach of *Charity* to condemn them; and a Breach of *Liberty* to hinder them: that they act upon generous Principles, and with a polite Behaviour. In opposition to this, God has told us other things, in all the *Copies* of the Bible; and that in plain Declarations, without putting us to the toil of drawing it out by consequence. The Text is easily understood. *He will not hold him guiltless that takes his Name in vain.* And the New Testament agrees with this Declaration of the Old. Our Lord has given us a Swearer in his natural Colours. *O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the Heart the Mouth speaketh.* *A good Man, out of the good Treasure of his Heart, brings forth good things: and an evil Man, out of the evil Treasure of his Heart, bringeth forth evil things.* *And I say unto you, that every idle Word, that Men shall speak, they shall give an Account thereof in the Day of Judgment: for, by THY WORDS thou shalt be justified, and by thy Words thou shalt be condemned.** Thus says the Apostle, *swear not* †, neither by Heaven, nor by the Earth, neither any other Oath; *lest you come into Condemnation* ‡. The Law, that is, the penal part of it, is made for the unholy and profane, as well as those Sinners that are of a more monstrous kind, *Murderers of Fathers, and Murderers of Mothers, and Man-slayers, and perjur'd Persons.* The question now is, when the Judgment is set, and the Books are open'd, whether the Bible or the Imaginations you have exalted against it, shall be regarded with honour. The *Word of God*, and the *Thoughts of Men*, are put in balance; and which do you think will be found wanting?

4. The Swearer throws a Contempt on all that's sacred, Commands, Promises, Threatnings, Doctrines, Histories, and the whole contents of the lively Oracles.

To

* Matt. xi. 34, 35, 36, 37. † Jam. v. 12. ‡ 1 Tim. i. 9.

To such an one nothing is pure, but his Mind and Conscience are defiled ||. The Scorn that he utters is voluminous enough, and reaches every thing in Religion. Ordinances are either neglected, or derided. He turns his *Thoughts* from the Revelation of the Gospel; he sets his *Mouth* against it. You will see the justice of this Character, if you do but consider the two sorts of People under which the Swearers of our Day may be ranged: either they are the stupid, careless Creatures, that never *think* of God but in a *Cloud*; and never *talk* of him but with an Oath; or they make some pretence to *Knowledge*, though with no show of *Reverence*. As to the former, the ragged Rabble, the numerous Herd who go on with unbridled Tongues, the mark of Vengeance is plain upon them. Their Lips are dirtier than their Feet: they speak more Filthiness than they walk in. But, alas! what do these know of God, his Word, his Institutions, his Promises, his great Salvation, the Immortality of the Soul, the Resurrection of the Body, and eternal Judgment? These things are indeed of the greatest importance to all human Nature; but truly such Persons think no more about 'em, than *the Horse and the Mule, that have no Understanding* §.

But there are Swearers of another sort, who would take it ill to be thrown into the heap of unthinking Sinners; and, yet they have no distinction from the rest, but what's an *Aggravation*. Ask them if they believe a God, a Judgment, a World to come, a Redemption; the necessity of an Holiness to be found in them, and of a Righteousness that must be imputed to them; if they say, that this is their Opinion, such a Faith must all be dead in the mouth of a Swearer. But indeed the Infidelity of our Age is more uniform to itself; and, generally speaking, they that profane the Name of God, profess no great Veneration for

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that

|| Tit. i. 15.

§ Psalm xxxii. 9.

that of JESUS; but with despitful minds they cast it out for a prey.

5. A Swearer is an enemy to Mankind, destroying all mutual confidence, that we can have in one another. A Person that makes *Veracity* uncertain, or the reputation that is owing to it impossible, is the plague of the World. He throws the Inhabitants of the Earth into a state of endless Quarrel; to be always hateful, and hating one another. He, that profanes the Name of God, is an universal Enemy, and draws into him the two Characters of the Devil, that he is a *Liar*, and a Murderer.

There are a thousand Cases that make us depend on human Testimony; and especially when we are driven to the necessity of an Oath. I will give you one, that may be a parallel to all the rest, *Exod. xxii. 10, 11.* If a Man deliver to his Neighbour an Ass, or an Ox, or any Beast to keep, and it die, or be hurt, or driven away, no Man being with it, then shall *an Oath of the Lord be between them*, that he has not put his hand to his Neighbour's Goods; and *the Owner shall accept thereof*, and he shall not make it good. It is supposed that he that swears will not dare to lay the Name of God upon a Lye; that he is filled with awe of his Majesty, and a dread of his Anger. And if the other Person takes this for granted, there's an end of the Controversy. Such a Testimony was equivalent to ocular Evidence. But *all this* would pass for nothing, if there was a suspicion, that the Man had no reverence of God. Men swear by a greater; by one that's infinitely above them, and searches the Heart; and such an Oath is for *Confirmation*. But I cannot be without my fears, that he who speaks of God profanely, will do it *deceitfully*. He, that pours out so many Oaths *without Book*, is not to be regarded when he does it *with one*. Can you take the most solemn Declaration for a Pledge of Truth, or an Appeal to Heaven from him, who froths up his usual talk

talk with those Words, that are set apart to these great Occasions? How can such an one expect any Faith in Men, who has none in the Lord? How can he talk with integrity who *swears at random?*

6. A Swearer sins without the least Temptation of Profit or Pleasure: as one of our antient Poets has well express'd it;

Take not his Name, who made thy Mouth, in vain;
It gets thee nothing, and has no excuse.
Lust and Wine plead Pleasure, Avarice Gain:
But the *cheap Swearer*, thro' his open Sluice
Lets his Soul run for naught, as little fearing;
Were I an *Epicure*, I could 'bate swearing.

The Drunkard and Glutton have the gratification of their Appetites, though at last it stings like a Serpent, and bites like an Adder. The covetous Man sells his Soul for something, though it is but little. But what Advantage has the Swearer? What Profit is there in Profaneness? We are told of some People, who sell themselves to the *Devil*; and they are always supposed to do it upon the consideration of *a present gain*. But the Swearer gives up himself for nothing; as if he thought his Soul below a bargain. He is both Devil and Sinner. He excuses the Tempter the trouble of laying a Snare, and rather chooses to *run* into it, than stay for a *call*. This is making haste to be vile, and sinning with both hands greedily. One would think that such a person imagined there was something amiable in Hell itself. A Crime without a *Temptation* is a Crime without *excuse*. Well may those Tongues be dumb'd at God's Bar, who are now so loud against his Name.

7. This is the Iniquity of the Devils. A Swearer is in pain to act out of the sphere of his own nature. We read of those who blaspheme God, because of Torments. The original and perfection of that work is below. The Spirits in Prison can only sin in a way

way suitable to themselves. They cannot be covetous, or Drunkards, or Adulterers, but they are eternal Swearers. *God is a Spirit*, and as they that worship him, do it in spirit; so do they that rebel against him. That State is the perfection of wickedness, as well as misery. The Impurities of the Devils are the effect of a Pride that began in Heaven, and the Anguish they feel in Hell. Therefore think, O Swearer, who is thy Pattern. Thou hast entred into the Practice of the Devil, and his Angels; and thou shalt have thy Portion with them. Satan lays his claim to many Sinners, because they are his Tools. But he seizes thee as his Mimick, his Picture, his Image, his Offspring. Thou art growing fit, and making meet for the Regions of Darkness; ripening for Hell, and practising before-hand what will keep thee doing for ever.

8. 'Tis a Crime against all the voice of Conscience. I believe every Swearer is sometimes afraid; a Reproof turns him in upon himself; or an Affliction makes him feel. He knows what it is to groan, and tremble. He is beforehand with the final Judgment. He is a Law to himself; and has been already tried and cast at his own Bar. Now, if our Hearts condemn us, God is greater than our Hearts, and knows all things. But, perhaps, Conscience sees it in vain to speak, and therefore reserves it for a Day, when it will be heard.

9. This Sin is committed with a Defiance to the best Laws in all the World. Those Men that have made it penal were the Pillars of the Earth. The most useful Acts of Parliament are against this Iniquity. What an Indignation are you filled with, when People reproach your King, and abuse the Liberty of your Country? They are Rebels, Malignants, Traitors, Incendiaries, and every thing that is vile. But is not all profane Language High-Treason against the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords? And if a Nation falls

falls into such hands, it looks as if we were overrun with the swarm of *Locusts* out of the bottomless Pit. Are not Swearers so many Devils dwelling in houses of clay? And, can our case be much better with those, that blaspheme a *God*, than with them, who adore a *Wafer*? A profane *Protestant* is viler to me than a sober *Papist*.

10. Swearing is the most proper to fill up the measure of their Iniquity, who are Disputants against *revealed Religion*. They are likely indeed to determine, whether Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are the only true God, who never call upon his Name in prayer; and never mention it but in blasphemy. Humble, serious Christians are working out their Salvation with fear and trembling; and they talk of it with a gravity. Though their opinion is not the Rule and Standard of Truth; yet, it is much that they should mistake it, and the Christian Doctrine be only known by those, who treat it with scorn. Orthodoxy must have miss'd its way, when it gets into their Mouths, who have no occasion for it. That a Swearer should be a *Critic*; and a Person who stifles the motions of a natural Conscience, should determine about the effectual Operations of the Spirit; is a Solecism in nature. Shall the *Object* of Worship be adjusted by those who are strangers and enemies to the *Practice*? and the authentick evidence of a particular Text receive its doom from those who know nothing of the Bible? Is the distinction of a supreme, and subordinate God, to have its Reputation from those, who say, *there is no God*? Such People as these are meeting their Vengeance half way. They unite the Characters, that the Scriptures have distinguished. They know not God; nor obey the Gospel of *Jesus Christ*, and shall be punished with everlasting Destruction from the Lord, and the Glory of his Power.

SERMON IV.

THAT this Text may be made as useful by an Application, as it has been clear in Doctrine, I shall,

First, Give you a few general Deductions from it ; and then, by a closer Attack upon the Conscience, make myself manifest to every one in the sight of God.

i. Though the Crime of profane Swearing is so great, yet it is no reproach upon the Patience of God, that he bears long with those that are guilty. Indeed, they stretch out their hands against him : They are bold enough to deny his Being ; and to dare his Power : But God lays not folly to them. And, because Sentence against an evil Work is not speedily executed, the Hearts of the Children of Men are fully set in them to do evil *. Instead of knowing †, that his Goodness should lead them to Repentance, they rather make it a means for their Impenitence. This has been a Stumbling-Block, and a sore Evil to many good Men ; that profane Sinners should defy the Almighty with courage ; and seem to come off with victory. Job was afraid ; and trembling took hold of his Flesh ‡, because the Rod of God was not upon them. The Psalmist was pricked in his Reins, when they were not in Trouble as other Men ||. It became unwieldy to his Reason. When he thought to know this, it was too painful for him. The Prophet Jeremiah feels himself in the like Agonies, when he pleads with God about his righteous Judgments : Wherefore does

* Ecccl. viii. 2.

† Rom. ii. 4.

‡ Job xxi. 7.

|| Psal. lxxiii. 16.

does the way of the Wicked prosper? Wherefore are they all happy, that deal very treacherously * ? You see by these Complaints, which they delivered in the bitterness of their Souls, that though the Trial is common, it is no less grievous. What the Scripture says of it is in a very general way; that he is God, and not Man, the Holy One of Israel in the midst of his People; and therefore does not execute the fierceness of his Anger. And, again; What if God, willing to make his Power known †, thus endures them with much long-suffering? As his ways of mercy are above ours, so are those of his justice. His Judgments are a great deep ‡. But, however, he will fetch a Glory from the very Clouds and Darkness, that are round about him: And the Wrath of Man, that is now so liberal in cursing him, will praise him. For,

2. This is a Witness given to the future Judgment. If there are no Retributions now, you may be assured, there's the more in reserve; for the Heavens shall declare his Righteousness; and all Men shall see his Glory ||. As Unbelief gives a wrong turn to every thing that happens, so Faith can make the best of it. When a Sinner is cut off reeking in his Lust, and railing in his Oaths, it's a loud peal of Argument in the Ears of all that hear it; so that a Man shall say, verily he is a God, that judgeth in the Earth ††. On the other hand, when there is an Indolence in his providential Wrath; and Sinners go on with an Impunity, Solomon made this to be the ground of a just conclusion: I saw the place of Righteousness, that Wickedness was there, and the place of Judgment, that Iniquity was there: But he does not say on that account, the Lord hath forsaken the Earth: Or, where is the God of Judgment? No; but thence he argues, and says in his heart, that God

shall

* Jer. xii. 1.
|| Psal. 1. 6.

† Rom. ix. 22.
†† Psal. lviii. 11.
‡ Psal. xxxvi. 6.

shall judge the Righteous, and the Wicked : for there is a time for every purpose, and to every Work *. Swearers may go on, and make a jest of the Divine Patience ; but they get nothing by it. They only *treasure up* to themselves Wrath against the Day of Wrath, and the Revelation of the righteous Judgment of God. Where you may observe, First, There is a *Treasure of Wrath* ; and they are throwing into the Stock by every Oath that they swear. Secondly, This is laid up against the Day of Wrath ; a Day that is devoted to it, and set apart for it. And, Thirdly, there will be a *Revelation* of that righteous Judgment that is now a Secret.

3. From hence we may conclude, that all the proceedings of that Day will be clear. Sinners shall have Experience instead of Argument. *We are sure that the Judgment of God is according to Truth against them that commit such Things.* And thinkest thou, O Man, who judgest them that do such things, and dost the same, *that thou shalt escape the righteous Judgment of God* †? The Fire that goes before him will convince, as well as consume ; and the Prosperity of these Fools will destroy them. What a damp must it be to the rich Man in Hell, who begged for a drop of Water, to be told, that in his Life-time he had received his good things ‡? He had fared deliciously, blasphemed profanely, 'till his Sin, and his Soul, are required together ; and as he lived a Rake, he died a Fool. His Miseries came upon him all at once. It is a sad woe to rich Men, that they have received their Consolation. A Swearer has a thousand times slipped through the human Laws : But he may look for long arrears of Justice. God has given us the true State of his Case : *These things thou hast done, and I kept silence : Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself : But I will reprove thee ; and set them in order before thine Eyes* ||. Because they have no changes, they

* Eccl viii. 10. † Rom. ii. 2,3. ‡ Luke xvi. 25. || Psal. l. 21.

they fear not God : But this is only to last for a little while ; for they are cast down in a moment ; their Calamity comes suddenly, and they are broken without remedy.

4. Here's an Insinuation, that even in this Life, God may rescue his Name from the contempt of Sinners ; and show the World, that *he will not hold them guiltless* that take it in vain. 'Tis true, these Judgments are not so frequent, as the narrowness of our Thoughts is apt to expect. We say ; Why is a Swearer suffered to poison the Air ; and breathe out nothing but Fire and Brimstone, from the bottomless Pit ? Why is not that Mouth stopt with Vengeance, which is so often opened in Blasphemy ? But, as the Judge of all the Earth will do Right, he is not to be hurried into these Executions, by methods of our contriving. And, it will be to his Glory, to have it said ; that *he gave them space to repent*, even though *they repented not*.

Nevertheless, the World is not without Examples of his being a *swift Witness* upon Earth. With this expedition he proceeded against the Jews. *Whilst the Flesh was between their Teeth*, the Plague was boiling up in their Blood. And thus very often, when an Oath is upon the Tongue of a Sinner, he is choaked in a moment. The last thing he says in this World, agrees with the first that he hears in the next ; cursing, howling, and gnashing of teeth. These Judgments are indeed God's *strange Work* ; which makes the Scoffers of the last Day say ; *Where is the Promise of his Coming* * ? Like those of old, who drew Iniquity with Cords of Vanity ; and finned as it were with a Cart-rope : saying, *Let him make speed, and hasten his Work, that we may see it ; and let the Counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh, and come, that we may know it* †. But, how often is the Candle of the Wicked put out ? and God distributes to them Sorrows in his anger ? They that will not *take an Example*,

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shall

* 2 Pet. iii. 3, 4.

† Isa. v. 18, 19.

The Sin and Danger of

shall be one. *Nebuchadnezzar* had fair warning given him by *Daniel*. But, though the *Dream* troubled him, the *Interpretation*, that ought to have done it more, dies away from his Memory. It is above a Year after he *heard* it, that he comes to *feel* it. And, when he is spreading himself out with Haughtiness, and Cruelty, how dreadful must the Clap of that Voice from Heaven be, *O Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken, the Kingdom is departed from thee* * ! Instead of being flattered as a God, he is turned out from Men as a Beast. His Grandson *Belshazzar hardened his Heart, though he knew all this* †. He is sporting and drinking, 'till the Night of his Debauchery is that of his Death. And, thus for the *Sin of his Lips* ‡, and the *Iniquity of his Mouth*, he is taken in his Pride, and for cursing and lying that he spake. But, I will go no farther in a distant Application. I shall now deliver myself in a more practical Form, to two Sorts of People.

First, Those that are guilty of taking God's Name in vain.

Secondly, Those that are innocent and upright from this great Transgression.

First, I may suppose the guilty to be of three sorts.

1. Some began very early with this Crime, and never made a stop to think about it. Little Children learn to swear as soon as they learn to speak. When *Nehemiah* heard the young *Jews* talk *half the Language of Ashdod, and half the Language of Canaan*, he curs'd them || ; that is, their Parents : as appears by his plucking off their Beards. But what is it, to our hearing them speak altogether the Language of Hell ? Alas ! they are entered into such an Education from their birth ;

* Dan iv. 31. † ch. v. 18. ‡ Psal. lix. 12. || Neh. xiii. 24.

birth ; and have neither shame, nor fear about the matter.

2. There are others, who know it is vile ; but they act in *Practice*, as several do about *Doctrines* : They do not deny the *Truth*, but the *Importance* ; by which their Profession becomes a thing of nought. These are farther off from Repentance than the other. They have altogether broke the *Yoke*, and burst the *Bands*. They'll excuse with a *Smile*, what they cannot defend by an *Argument*. Whereas, he that keeps the Commandment, keeps his own Soul : But *he that despises his way shall die*. They are not so ignorant as the former ; but are a hundred times more guilty. The swearing of a poor, stupid Creature, who can hardly talk a word of sense, is rather contemptible, than dangerous. But among those, who are better instructed, *one Sinner destroys much good*.

3. I fear there are several, who have had the example and admonition of serious Parents ; and yet have no regard to either. These are beforehand with all the Arguments, that I can use. They despise them, and set them at nought. Talk to them about the Zeal of their Fathers ; and the Reputation that shone through it ; put them in mind of former Convictions ; lay before them the Principles of Conscience ; these are Bands, that they have broke asunder, and Cords, that they have cast away from them. They are ashamed of their Glory ; and glory in their Shame. What we call the Nurture, and Admonition of the Lord, they reckon a narrowness of Education. It is well if their Wound is not *incurable* ; and what refuses to be healed. I have several times hinted at what I have five hundred times observed, that God leaves those People to gross Defects in *natural Religion*, who are enemies against his *Revelation*. However, divine Grace can do any thing. And, with a view to this, I shall lay before them a few Heads of Exhortation.

1. Begin with a sincere and bitter humiliation. *Search, and try your ways; and turn unto the Lord**. What have you been doing for so many years? What a multitude of drunken, passionate Oaths, have come out of your lips, which are all noted down in the Book of Remembrance? Think over the evil of your Words: Chafe it upon your Minds; and wonder that God has not *damn'd your Blood*, as you have so often dared him to do it. Indeed, this is bitter work: But, you must either have it on Earth, or in Hell. And in this World a *godly Sorrow* works a Repentance, never to be repented of.

2. Immediately break off the Company, that have ensnared you into this vile custom. 'Tis dangerous to *hear*, what it is criminal to *speak*. The Practice insinuates, and winds itself into you by degrees. The first sound of an Oath gives a *Terror*: In a little while it becomes an *Indifference*; and then a *Delight*. If you cannot cure a Swearer, be sure to leave him; that you do not learn of his ways, and get a Snare to your Souls. When one of a sober Education can *repeat* those Stories with a gust, where the Wit turns upon an Oath, I always fear, that Man's *Fancy* has got the better of his *Conscience*.

3. Be more in the conversation of sober, serious People: And, if the Righteous smite you, esteem it *as a kindness*: It is *an excellent Oil*†, that will not break your Head. I hope you may have wit without this Impiety; and find true, good Sense among these, that hate this vile language; and suffer no corrupt Communication to come out of their mouth. Certainly you may be pleasant, without being profane. An Oath is no part of eloquence; and gives no relish to conversation. If some that I know would but change their Company, they would find what a long mistake they have lived in: That mirth and laughter are not to be supported by driving away the thoughts

of

★ Lam. iii. 4c.

† Psa!. cxli. 5.

of another World. Those People have the truest enjoyment of one another, and make their acquaintance chearful, where the *Name* of God is never profaned; and his *Creatures* never abused. Swearing is a rattling Impertinence; and must be nauseous to People of learning, and good manners. 'Tis fit for none but the Off-scouring of the Earth, and the Filth of all things. 'Tis a Maxim of the Devil, which he has stampt upon the World, that when People begin to be serious, they begin to be melancholy. There is not a more notorious Lye that he ever spake: And yet, this one *Falshood* has destroy'd its thousands. In persuading you to break off your evil Company, I should think the Exhortation very imperfect, if I did not direct you to make choice of what is better; for a reserved Temper, and a recluse Life are the most en-snaring of any thing in the World.

4. Guard against the *other* Sins that have betray'd you into *this*; whether it be drunkennes or passion. These are oftentimes pleaded as an *Excuse* for swearing: But that's a strange way of arguing, that two Crimes should be les provoking than one; or that a Man should have les of the *Devil*, because he has more of the *Brute*.

5. Read over the Word of God; and charge your Memories with whatever you see there, as your Guide, or your Guard. *David* says, *my Heart stands in awe of thy Word*. Think over the Commands, the Promises, the Threatnings, and the Examples, that relate to profane Swearing. Roll them in your minds, as a Preservative against the grand Infection of the Age we live in. *Above all things, my Brethren, swear not.**

6. Preserve a Reverence for the Doctrines of the Gospel. When-ever People are prevailed on to deny *Mysteries*, they are not far from being profane. And, though some have laid it down as a Maxim, that where Mystery comes in, Religion goes out; I should

rather fear, that when *Mystery* goes out from the Pulpit, *Swearing* comes into the Assembly. It's not the first time that a Man, who denied the *Lord that bought him*, went on to curse and swear *. But, when God sends his Ministers with Redemption to his People, then *holy and reverend is his Name* †. The style of Free-thinkers is very well known among us.

7. Recommend yourselves to the influence and protection of the Holy Spirit. Call in the Aids of restraining, sanctifying, and quickning Grace. Who knows, but Swearers may come in among the monuments of divine Love, and be the Trophies of an almighty Arm? Let none of us go out in our own strength. Peter little thought, that he should have denied his *Lord* and Master; and much less that he should profane the Name of his *God*. 'Tis likely, that he never knew, what cursing and swearing was before that day. And we have need to take the caution, that our Lord gave, with a view to that Man's danger; *Watch, and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.* Make that your petition to him, which he has made his advice to you; *Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth* ‡: and thus you will be more and more conformed to *Christ*, who had *Grace poured into his lips*. These Rules I recommend to your care, and God's blessing; and shall only inforce them by three Arguments, that I have not mentioned before:

1. Here's a Crime that may be spared without any loss of reputation. No man upon earth will think the worse of you for the want of it. And though many reckon it no fault, yet no one ever thought the not having it was a defect. You will certainly be odious to the better part of Mankind; and you are never the more welcome to the worse. It cannot pass for a Beauty. Some People are admired, for what may be called their Covetousness. *Men will praise thee, when thou dost well to thy self* ||. Others may

* Matt. xxv. 74. † Psal. cxi. 9. ‡ Psal. cxli. 3. || Psal.

may be flattered in their Pride, and Vanity. Sensuality recommends you to the Esteem of *Wine-Bibbers, and riotous Eaters of Flesh.* But Profaneness is universally abhorred ; and the Persons that are more guilty than yourselves will in scorn be ready to call you *Reprobates.*

2. This Sin will grow upon you more than any other. Old Age gives a turn to the course of our Iniquities. What was your pleasure in the warmth of blood, and the flush of spirits, becomes an indifference afterwards. Men are often cured of their *Sensuality*, not by Grace, but by Nature. We read of *youthful Lusts* ; which supposes that they are chiefly prevalent in that part of life. But if Swearing fills your days, 'tis likely to close them. 'Tis the Sin of many who are bowing down for very Age : and go tottering, creeping, and cursing into their graves.

3. 'Tis like to be your eternal Language. Hell itself does not cure it. *They blaspheme the Name of God, who has power over their Plagues* *. The Lusts of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eye, and the Pride of Life, are all at an end, when you die. But you will be *Swearers for ever.* He that is unholy, will be unholy still.

Secondly, The other branch of my Exhortation is directed to such as either the grace or the providence of God has kept innocent and upright from *the great Transgression.* They have not stood in the way of Sinners, or sat in the seat of the Scornful. That I may give you the particulars of your Duty, with some distinction, I will place them under two heads.

1. Your Carriage to them that are guilty.
2. Your Acknowledgment to him, that has kept you clear.

I. How must we behave to those, who take the Name of God in vain ? That we may not be partakers

* Rev. xvi. 11.

takers of other Men's Sins, but may keep ourselves pure? The Laws of our Land have made it criminal and penal for any Person to curse and swear profanely; who may be convicted by a single Witness. And certainly every Christian desires to know, what the Lord requires of him.

1. 'Tis one great part of our Duty, *not to walk with wicked men* out of choice or affection. *David*, who had more Temptations than any of us, would not *sit with vain Persons, nor go in with Dissenters*. *He abominated the Congregation of Evil-doers, and the Workers of Iniquity* *. I am not speaking of your Affairs in Trade, which obliges you to such Company. The Apostle has determin'd this point with all the plainness that can be desired. I wrote to you not to keep company with Fornicators, *yet not altogether with the Fornicators of this World*; nor with the Covetous, or Extortioners, or Adulterers: for then *you must needs go out of the World* †. Religion supposes we are not got *out of the World*; and therefore directs our behaviour whilst we are *in it*: To be blameless and harmless, as the Sons of God, *in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation* ‡. My Exhortation does not oppose itself to any necessity, that Providence shall lay you under. You may be among Swearers, and yet *hate those, that hate God* ||, and be grieved with those, that rise up against him.

But your choice of their Company, without any Attempt to make them better, will be an hardning of them, and an hazard to yourselves. You chuse your Associates in this World, with whom you are to have your Eternity in another. I don't dissuade Persons from conversing with these Sinners; because I know from many an Observation, that the presence of some that hate this Vice, has kept *them* in, who are guilty. And I cannot tell but God may bleſs a wise Reproval, and place it upon an obedient Ear. I have seldom

met

* Psal. xxvi. 4. † 1 Cor. v. 9, 10. ‡ Phil. ii. 15. || Psal. 139.21;

met with any, who pretend to give it a Vindication. And therefore I fear, the Reason why several People have Courage to offend, is because we have not courage to rebuke 'em. If you have no hope of making an Impression upon them, it is certainly your Duty to have done with them; that as there is no prospect of doing Good, there may be no danger of getting Harm. It is no small part of the Conversation that becomes the Gospel, that our chosen, and delightful Acquaintance be such as fear the Lord.

2. We should always carry along with us a Resolution not to suffer a Reproach upon the Name of God, if it is in our power to prevent it. Every Believer is listed into the Service of his Lord; and should be zealous for the Honour of him, who has chosen him to be a Soldier. If this was our Principle, and this our Maxim, we should not be so deficient, as a timorous, bashful, and selfish Temper does often make us. The Man that loves his King, and the Laws of his Country, will not bear the Insult of an Enemy upon either of them. 'Tis a Point of Honour with him, not to be silent; and, especially, if he is obliged by a Post of Trust, or Favour. If he eats the King's Bread, or has an Office under him, it betrays a narrowness of Soul, to suffer any indecent Language upon his Master. This is our very Case. Has not God given us Bread to eat? Is not he thy Life, and the Length of thy Days? Have we not lift up our Hands to him? And shall we be patient, when a Creator, a Friend, a Father, and a Lord, are insulted by a rattling noisy Fool? 'Tis a sign, that we have more of an earthly, than an heavenly Loyalty, and are sooner touched at an Offence against a *Man, that shall die*, than those directed against the King, eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God *.

3. Though it is very hard to tell what is the most prudent, and likely Way to rebuke a Swearer; yet it

* 1 Tim. i. 17.

it must not be totally neglected. It is a dreadful Character given of him, who is Partner with a Thief, that he wrongs his own Soul : But the great Article of his Guilt and Danger is, that *he hears cursing and bewrays it not.* As if there was something viler in concealing an Oath, than in receiving stolen Goods. The Scripture has left a great deal to the Determination of that Wisdom, that is *profitable to direct*; and therefore every one of us, who lacks this Wisdom should *ask it of God*; that he may show us how to act, when the Wicked are before us. Something *must* be done, either in Pity to the Sinner, or in a Zeal for our Maker. I will therefore go on by degrees, and inquire what the Scripture has told us about our Duty. *Of some we are to have Compassion, making a difference. Others to save with Fear, pulling them out of the Fire.**

4. The Case is very clear, how we should deal with those, who despise what we say. *Rebuke not a Scourer, lest he hate thee; Reprove a wise Man, and he will love thee †.* It is observed of *Abigail*, that whilst *Nabal* was drunk, she told him nothing either less or more, 'till the Wine was got out of him. Christ himself, who regarded not the Persons of Men, or feared the Face of any, has bid us not to give that which is *holy unto Dogs* ‡; nor cast out *Pearls before Swine*; lest they trample them under their Feet, and turn again and rend us. The danger is, that these vile People will grow more outrageous; and so, instead of diminishing, we shall multiply *Transgressions among Men*. They will revenge themselves upon us, by pouring out a more copious Indignation on the Name of *God*. When this appears to be the Case; and we are convinced, that there is no Prospect of doing any good; it would be a sort of *debasng* the Exhortation, to use it any longer. But,

5. If it does so, we ought to shew the same contempt of *them*, that they do of *God*; and let an incurable

* Jude 22. † Prov. ix. 8. ‡ Mat. vii. 6.

curable Sinner see, that he is to us *the vilest of Men.* It is said both of *David* and of *Christ*, *The Zeal of thine House hath eaten me up; and the Reproaches of them that reproached thee, are fallen upon me* †. And if profane Persons will speak ill of me, I take it for an Honour, that my Name suffers with that of my Creator. This may be a means to humble and awake them. And if it be not, it will pass among the Testimonies we give to the Honour of our God. If we are not ashamed of *them*, it looks as if we were ashamed of *him*. We are told at large; and the Observation reaches to all Cases, that he who despises Reproof is brutish. Treat them as Brutes, as People that act below the Dignity of Human Nature.

When a Man neglects his Business, and runs on with violence to his own destruction, if you cannot reclaim him, but he insults, and disdains you, you let him alone, to be instructed by feeling. And, if this proves a breach of Friendship, that you are hated for your Kindness, it is time to have done with such an one. And so it is here: That Man's Company is not worth having, who *blasphemes the worthy Name by which you are called* ‡. He may have other Endearments, but this makes 'em all unsavoury. You would not be intimate with the best Scholar in the World, who is always railing at your Father, or your King. These Ingredients would spoil the whole Conversation. And, will you thus *requite the Lord, who has bought you*; and suffer him to be insulted by every noisy Fool, who swears only to *fill his Nonsense, and to empty his Atheism?* For what a vile abundance must there be in that Heart, out of which such a Mouth speaketh?

6. I would not have you take it for granted, that every Swearer will despise your Reproof, *without trying.* My Reason is; Because I have been oftentimes very happily deceived; and have met with *Gratitude,* where

† Psal. lxix. 9.

‡ Jam. ii. 7.

where I was afraid of *Indignation*. I have more reason to charge myself with *Cowardice*, than those, whom I have been amongst, with *Reluctance*. In showing a Sinner the error of his way, we are doing the Lord's *Work*, and may expect his *Blessing*. He, that has directed the *Means*, can give the *Success*. I have seen a Swearer so alarm'd at a gentle Rebuke, as if he was struck with a Clap of Thunder. We ought not to despair so hastily, as we are apt to do: For, you tell the Man the very same, that his own Conscience has told him many a time. 'Tis not like arguing against a false Opinion, where there must be abundance of pains, to dissolve the wrong way of thinking, that a Person has got into. No: There's a *Spirit within him*, on your side. And, if he is not a *stupid Wretch*, he will scarce have the Courage to be a *Gain-sayer*. There is something so vile in the Practice of Swearing, that there may be a *Shame* without the Fear of God. How impertinent is it to have *two great Words* in every Sentence, that signify nothing at all? And though they take up so much of the *Sound*, have no part of the *Sense*! 'Tis no better than rattling, and bawling in Company, when People lengthen out their Talk by supplemental Forms of unmeaning Superfluities. I should not fear to let many a one see, that he acts beneath a Wit, a Scholar, or a Gentleman: That he talks without either politeness or decency; who perhaps is under no impression from Arguments of a better kind.

7. Make your Reproof as useful as you can; and let it rather be in a way of *Intreaty* than *Indignation*. Lead 'em into a Sense of this Wickedness; that the Reflection may be *their Act*, and not *yours*. Some Persons have greatly succeeded this way, as we know by many Examples. A Minister in this City, from whom I had the Story, was obliged to wait on King WILLIAM; and as he might easily be known at Court by his Garb, and had a very great

Name

Name among his Brethren ; a Nobleman of the first Rank entred into Conversation with him. He complain'd of those, who were not of *Whiggish* Principles, and said, it would never be well with *England*, 'till these were turn'd out of the Administration. All this while there was a free current of Oaths and Curses. Upon which the Minister answered him to this purpose : “ I perceive, my Lord, there are two Parties among you ; and your Lordship is of opinion, that only one of 'em, are fit to be intrusted with the Affairs of Government. You must think so upon one of these Principles : Either that there is no over-ruling Power that determines the course of the World ; but that human Wisdom is left to shift the best that it can : or, if there is, that *your* Ways are more pleasing to him than *theirs* ; and that his Name is more honoured by *you*, than it is by *them*. ” “ Sir, says the Nobleman, I thank you for this Reproof. It is almost the first time I ever received one, for a Crime of which I am daily guilty. And, if we had more of such Company, we should have fewer Swearers among us.”

8. Be sure that you convince them, that your Zeal proceeds from no partiality against *them* : That in blaming their Carriage to God, you are not avenging yourselves upon any provocation given to *you* : Or, otherwise, your Practice will arise from a *wrong Principle*, and can have no other tendency, than to a *bad end*. If you are silent in reproving a Friend, and ready to expose an Enemy, 'tis not likely to do any good. I should think it would be no difficult matter to show an ingenuous Person, that a love to him may unite itself with a Zeal for God. And if they should revile you now, you carry your witness in their bosom. For *he that rebukes a Man shall afterwards find more favour than he that flatters with the Tongue.*

There is also another Argument, that should incline you to this Conduct, and that is, the Reputation it gives to Religion. God himself proceeds with meekness: *As many as I love I rebuke and chasten* †. And his Love appears in the very Rebuke itself; for when we are *chastened of the Lord*, it is that we may not be condemned with the World. So that in this case, he is both your *Friend*, and your *Example*. Perhaps, though the Scorer despise you, yet the Simple will be made wise. We have often known, that when an Advice has been lost upon the Person for whom it was design'd, it has proved an Ordinance of God to others.

9. The exposing of these People to penalty and shame *may be* your Duty, but the determination of that must be left to your prudence. You know how ready some would be to call this Rudeness; and represent it as a most dishonourable Action; as if they thought so much tenderness was owing to their *Names*, who show so little to that of the *Most High*; as if it was less evil to profane a God, than it is to expose a Sinner.

I cannot answer this either from a better authority, or with greater reason, than in the Words of that learned and valuable Prelate, Dr. Fleetwood, who was the Ornament of his Title, and one of the best Examples for those, who are stretching towards that *Dignity*: because he never made *Whiggism* an Equivalent to Christianity. "Remember, says he, that whosoever swears in common Conversation, is liable to forfeiture, if complained of. They lie at the mercy of every one, who would inform against them. And I wish this Law would take better effect, than it has already done: and that People would keep one another in awe, by the Power that it gives you, to put them to expence and shame, who are guilty of swearing. The Name

† Rev. iii. 19.

“ Name of an *Informer* is in some Cases odious ;
“ but in this Case it is not. Here he gets nothing
“ by it, because the Forfeiture goes to the Poor ;
“ which is doing so much good to them that want
“ it : And it is done for a good end, that God may
“ not be dishonoured ; and that a sinful Practice in
“ our Neighbour may not be suffered to go on to
“ his grief, and mischief.” And though this ex-
cellent Person was remarkable for a meek and quiet
spirit, yet he says farther, “ I should not be ashamed
“ myself to turn *Informer* in this Case, if it should so
“ fall out.”

I will add one thing more under this Head ; that though it is left to your liberty by the Laws of Men, whether you will prosecute an Offender, or no ; yet there's an awful Passage in the Law of God, that I must leave with your Consciences. *If a Soul sin, and hear the voice of swearing, whether he has seen it, or known of it, if he does not utter it, he shall bear his Iniquity* †. But *Magistrates*, who have it in their power, (if I don't mistake the nature of their Duty) are not at liberty to be silent : If they bind themselves by a solemn Oath, that will put the Laws in execution, I cannot but think, that a Justice of Peace must be guilty of *false Swearing*, who does not punish *profane Swearing*.

10. Be sure to follow all your Endeavours with Prayer to God ; with a dependance on his Grace for your Conduct, and a desire of his Blessing for your success. I am afraid that we are deficient here. How do you know but your Methods for the Reformation of a Sinner might have prov'd more beneficial, if you had been importunate with God to make them so ? It may be you have often reprov'd a Swearer ; did you ever pray for him ? And can it be expected, that any of our poor Endeavours, who do many right things in a wrong way, should avail without a Blessing

F. 2.

† Lev. vi. 1.

from

from above? If a Sinner turns from the Error of his way, it is *the Lord his God* that turns him; and then he is turn'd indeed *. What you chiefly desire in all your Attempts is the Honour of a Redeemer, that *his Name*, which is now so little in the Mouth of a Swearer, may be great in all the Earth. And, though you wish for this, do you think to attain it of yourselves? It is to be followed with Prayer, as well as Zeal. And that Petition should go along with all your Endeavours: *Hallowed be thy Name; thy Kingdom come.*

Secondly, I will now conclude the whole with a few Directions, that are of a more abstracted Nature; and do not immediately concern your Carriage to profane Swearers.

1. Admire the Goodness of God, that has thus far restrained you. If there is not a Renewal of Nature, yet it is a mercy that you do not run into the broad ways of Destruction. Your Sins do not go beforehand unto Judgment †. Bless him that gave you a religious Education. Indeed there's a great deal more wanting. But as we live in an Age, that makes but little of it, don't you fall in with the generation that despises their Fathers, and the God of their Fathers too. We have lived to see *Bethel* turned into *Beth-haven*; the House of God, (as those Words signify) into an House of Vanity. The Families, in which was heard the voice of prayer and joy, never talk of the Lord but in Schemes that are unglorious to his Nature; or in Language that throws dirt upon his Name. *The Stones of those Houses may cry out of the Wall; and the Beams out of the Timber answer them* ‡. And, therefore, you have reason to be thankful, that the Care of your Parents was so great, and the Effect of it so lasting. For my part, when

I con-

* Jer. xxxi. 18.

† 1 Tim. v. 24.

‡ Heb. ii. 11.

I consider how little can be said for Swearing, and how little is done against it; I am sometimes surpriz'd, that it is common; and sometimes, that it is not more so.

2. Be sure that you keep your Families clear of this Crime. I have the same dread of a Swearer, that I have of a Thief. Upon this Head I choose again to express my own Thoughts, in the Words of an Eminent Bishop, who was our best Writer for the Cause of Liberty; and made a nobler Stand than many of his Equals in his own Nation. And therefore there is no occasion to have his Opinion flurted at, as Priestcraft, and the Doctrine of High-Church.
“ Let not any of your Children, says he, dare to
“ swear without your Anger, and immediate Chastise-
“ ment. Keep not a Servant under your Roof,
“ who is guilty of this wicked Practice. Their La-
“ bours will not be blessed by God to you. Em-
“ ploy no Workmen, that will not do their Busines
“ without swearing. Relieve no Poor, who are guil-
“ ty of thus dishonouring God. You cannot tell
“ how far these Methods may be followed with a
“ Blessing, which I am afraid many of you never
“ tried. And if you would but set about it in
“ earnest, to put away evil from your Taberna-
“ cles; and resolve that you and your Houses will
“ fear the Lord, we should soon see the good of
“ Jerusalem.”

3. If the Lord will not hold him guiltless that takes his Name in vain, do you abstain from all appearance of this Evil †. The gross way of profane Swearing, and Cursing, I suppose, you are kept out of. But the thing commanded here is “ an holy
“ and reverend Use of those Titles, by which the
“ Lord your God has made himself known.” I have formerly taken the liberty to warn you against a Practice, that is a plain Breach of this Law; tho’

he Crime is not so notorious and horrible, as those that I have expos'd ; and that is a trivial Use of God's Name, in some forms of Wonder, and Anger, that obtain among us. When People mean no more, than to tell the surprize they are in, they will cry out, *Lord God* ; or *God bless me*. Whereas his Blessing is a thing of more importance than to be thrown off the Tongue with so little Attention. And, that saying, *God knows*, when we design no more, than that we don't know, is taking his Name in vain ; and playing his Omnipotence upon a trifling. That Phrase also, *for God's sake*, is oftentimes a mere superfluity, and not at all delivered, or regarded as an Argument, for what we ask, or others can give. These ways carry us on beyond the Gospel-Simplicity, concerning which it is said, that *whatsoever is more than this cometh of Evil* †.

Not but that I think the Scripture has given us Examples of a more frequent Use of this Word, than our Ancestors would allow. They were certainly in the right, never to mention the Name of God without reverence. But I find it admitted upon those Occasions, in the Bible, of which they were jealous, lest it should be abus'd. When Boaz came to the Reapers, he said, *the Lord be with you* ; and they answer'd, *the Lord bless thee* †. I take this indeed for an Argument, that a serious way of speaking had obtain'd among them : For to pronounce these Words without an awe upon our Minds, is not rendering to him *the Fruit of our Lips* : And they had better be totally dropt, than lightly used. But there is a great deal of beauty in a serious mention of that Name with our Promises, and Designs. They are reprov'd, who say, *we will go to such a City, and continue there a Year ; and buy, and sell, and get gain* ¶ : whereas we know not what shall be on the morrow. Now a Conviction of this is always supposed in any Resolution

† Jam. v. 12.

‡ Ruth ii. 4.

¶ Jam. iv. 13.

Resolution that we make ; but it should be express'd,
Ye ought to say, *If the Lord will* we shall live, and do
this, or that. The Apostle prays, that he might
have a prosperous Journey by the Will of God, to come
to them. This gives a happy Flavour to our Con-
versation. It was Nehemiah's habitual Language, that
things prospered with him, *through the good Hand of*
his God upon him.

4. Prepare for that World, where this Name will
be glorified in you, and you in it †. There it is men-
tioned without ceasing ; but ever without Insolence
or Vanity. The Angels, that day and night are call-
ing, crying, and singing to him, cover their Faces
before him. The Saints that are speaking of his
Mercies, are fill'd with Reverence, Wonder, and
Affection to him. They delight themselves in his
great Goodness. And, therefore let us join that As-
sembly above, in a Similitude of Service, before we
do it by a translation of our Persons ; and say,
Blessed be his GLORIOUS NAME for ever and ever ;
and let the whole Earth be filled with his Praise. Amen,
and Amen ‡.

† 2 Thess. i. 12.

‡ Psal. lxxii. 19.



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